



THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

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STATEMENT

by

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THIRD SECRETARY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Controller B. Tucci Bartsiotas, for introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on the budget performance of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 under agenda item 158. I would also like to thank the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for presenting this body's related report.

The presence of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is of paramount importance for the Republic of Serbia. Its framework is based on UNSCR 1244 (1999) and is a guarantee of the status neutrality of the international presence in the Province. Its status-neutral approach remains the only acceptable framework within which it is possible to work together to ensure a better life to all the people of Kosovo and Metohija and it plays the key role in the creation of conditions for peace and security in the Province, respect of human rights and the restoration of trust among all its communities. My country firmly believes that the presence of the United Nations Mission is of paramount importance for stability in the Province and for the creation of conditions that should lead to a lasting and sustainable solution of the question of Kosovo and Metohija. Its presence in the undiminished mandate therefore must be maintained.

In his Report on the UNMIK budget proposal for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, the Secretary-General says that, "[p]ursuant to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), the strategic objective of the Mission remains to strengthen and consolidate peace, security and stability in Kosovo and the region". Serbia is highly appreciative of the commitments made in the Report that UNMIK will continue to facilitate "the implementation of the political and technical agreements reached" by Belgrade and Priština „in the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue, in particular the *First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations* of 19 April 2013," as well as of those related to its active role in the establishment of the Community of Serb Majority Municipalities, promotion of safety of returnees, determination of the fate of missing persons, protection and preservation of cultural and religious heritage sites and the continued monitoring of the situation in the special protective zones.

Mr. Chairman,

Of particular importance to my country is to strengthen UNMIK's human rights and rule of law sectors, as well as its Mitrovica Regional Office. The Reports on the work of UNMIK, considered in the Security Council every three months, indicate that many problems continue to exist in these areas, while his latest Report to be considered in the Security Council on 16 May says that "Kosovo continues to face numerous significant challenges in the rule of law sector, not least the independence and impartiality of the justice sector. In this regard, support from international partners, including UNMIK and other United Nations entities, should be harnessed creatively within the context of the

ongoing European agenda in the region.” It goes on to say that “[m]uch work remains to be done in Kosovo to promote greater tolerance and reconciliation among its communities, to ensure the protection of minority rights, to facilitate the return of the displaced, to uphold their property rights and safeguard religious traditions without impediment or stigma.”

Mr. Chairman,

To achieve its goals and objectives, UNMIK requires proper staffing and financial resources. The tendency to reduce the staffing and the number of international personnel in substantive and support component, the key element for a successful implementation of the UNMIK mandate, is of particular concern for the Republic of Serbia. UNMIK cannot carry out its mandate if its personnel are reduced and its successful implementation is invaluable for all people of Kosovo and Metohija, particularly for the Serbs and other non-Albanians whose rights, including freedom of movement and security, continue to be seriously threatened seventeen years after the end of the conflict. Ethnically motivated incidents and many other problems facing the Serbs and other non-Albanians, especially the returnees, evince in a very patent way that the reduction of the number of personnel and the amount of resources are far from warranted by the situation on the ground. After all, the hard, sad facts cannot be got around: out of over 220 000 Serbs and other non-Albanians, forced to leave their homes in Kosovo and Metohija since June 1999, only less than 5 per cent have returned and only about 4 000 (1.9 per cent) of them achieved sustainable return. The Reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council are also indicative of the descending trend of returns.

Mr. Chairman,

Serbia is very concerned over the proposed reduction of the UNMIK budget for the 2016/2017 period by US\$3,544,100.00 or 8.9 per cent compared to the current period. The tendency of the continuous annual reduction of the Mission, as shown in the Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, is of particular concern. The table in paragraph 12 of the Report indicates that the budget was reduced every year in the last 5 years and that the budget for 2016/2017 will be smaller by 22.3 per cent compared to 2012/2013 if the proposal of the Secretary-General is approved. In the informal consultations on this agenda item, we shall request the Secretariat to provide a breakdown of the UNMIK budget proposals (with the amounts of monetary allocations and the number of personnel) in the last ten years, since we consider that the reductions were not justified.

In that context, Serbia regrets the proposed net reduction of the number of posts and positions by 20 (2 of which are substantive) and the conversion of international posts to national. We take issue with paragraph 66 of the Report of the Secretary-General to streamline the substantive and support functions of the Mission by a net reduction of 20 posts and positions in order to achieve efficiency gains. In paragraph 27 of the Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, however, it is said that “such gains are not usually attributed to staffing reductions in the substantive

components of peacekeeping missions” and is called on the Secretary-General to provide explanations as to why the proposed reductions are, in the case of UNMIK, all considered efficiency gains. After all, it is hard to imagine how the reduction of posts and positions helps improve efficiency and functioning of the Mission.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.