



## **THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

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72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
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Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

*Check against delivery*

### **STATEMENT**

by

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THIRD SECRETARY  
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

New York, 8 May 2018

Mr. Chair,

I would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Controller Bettina 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 2016 to 30 June 2017 and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 under agenda item 157. I would also like to thank the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for presenting this body's related report.

Serbia attaches great importance to UNMIK's activities in Kosovo and Metohija. It is the Mission the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities trust the most and its continued presence is of paramount importance also because its mandate, based on UNSCR 1244 (1999), is the guarantor of the status neutrality of the international presence in the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija. Because of the evident and long-lasting lack of inter-ethnic trust, the international presence is indispensable if we are ever to build lasting peace, stability, security and genuine confidence among Kosovo and Metohija communities, as well as implement the agreements reached in the dialogue between Belgrade and Priština conducted with the facilitation of the European Union.

My country considers that UNMIK's continued role and presence, undiminished in scope and unchanged in mandate, are of utmost importance, evinced also by the recent events in the Province. We expect that the calls for savings will not cause any unjustified reductions in UNMIK's budget for the period 2018/2019, which would have an adverse effect on its key and long-term role in building and preserving stability in Kosovo and Metohija and, by the same token, in the region of the Western Balkans.

Mr. Chair,

Serbia calls for a proactive United Nations approach to the question of Kosovo and Metohija and is opposed to all the intentions to marginalize it within the United Nations system, primarily in the context of the current volatile and sensitive situation in Kosovo and Metohija which requires UNMIK's continued presence in the field. There is no doubt that UNMIK is in need of properly strengthened personnel and financial capacities to meet all the demands and challenges in the implementation of its mandate.

This assertion is confirmed by the incident of 26 March 2018 that took place in Kosovska Mitrovica, when the special units of the "Kosovo police" interrupted a peaceful gathering held in the context of the internal dialogue on Kosovo and Metohija and arrested, in a brutal action, Director of the Serbian Office for Kosovo and Metohija Marko Đurić. This incident shocked and caused great concern in Serbia. The letter of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Ivica Dačić in relation to this event has been issued as Security Council official document S/2018/274. In his latest Report to the Security Council on the work of UNMIK, the United Nations Secretary-General notes that "a number of developments during the reporting period heightened tensions and negatively impacted relations between Belgrade and Priština", as well as that "the conduct of Kosovo police during a high-profile operation such as the arrest of Mr. Đurić, which resulted in a

number of injuries, is cause for concern” and that “a thorough inquiry is needed into 26 March events, with corrective action in case of failures to uphold human rights”. This apparently pre-planned, frightful action of Priština confirms unequivocally the position of Serbia, stated on many occasions, of the need for UNMIK’s continued presence in undiminished scope.

Also, the recent tragic murder of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović was a cause of grave concern and confirmed once again the seriousness and volatility of the overall security situation in Kosovo and Metohija and, by extension, the need for a permanent and committed presence of UNMIK in the Province. In that context, very indicative are the statements in the last Report of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK in which he “notes, with concern, the slow pace of progress of the investigation”, as well as that “so long as credible answers and justice are not obtained, mutual suspicions and perceptions of insecurity will continue to undermine efforts to build trust amongst communities throughout Kosovo”.

Let me remind you also on this occasion that over 200 000 internally displaced persons who fled Kosovo and Metohija due to threats and persecution continue to be in the central part of Serbia even today, almost 19 years since the arrival of the international presences to the Province. Only 1.9 per cent of them realized a sustainable return, mostly due to numerous attacks on Kosovo and Metohija Serbs, their property and cultural heritage, to which UNMIK should devote additional attention. Particularly distressing are the data contained in the latest Report of the Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK in which it is said that “during the reporting period, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded three voluntary returns to Kosovo by members of non-majority communities”.

Mr. Chair,

We are disappointed that the problem with vacancies in UNMIK continues to exist, especially in the substantive component. It is necessary to fill all the vacant posts expeditiously, in accordance with the recommendation reiterated in the ACABQ Report. The failure to fill the vacancies is an outright violation of the General Assembly resolution on the financing of UNMIK A/71/303, which provides for the composition and number of personnel for this Mission. By continuing with this practice, the Secretariat is turning a blind eye to the relevant provisions of the said resolution, as well as the ACABQ recommendations calling for an expeditious filling of the vacancies.

We do not agree with the ACABQ recommendation to apply a higher vacancy rate to the cost estimates for international staff than proposed by the Secretary-General and we wonder why such recommendation is included in its Report this year, even though the discrepancy between budgeted and actual vacancy rates in UNMIK has been the case for many years now. If applied, this recommendation would result in the reduction of \$727,700 to the amount proposed by the Secretary-General. We have reservations towards this recommendation of the ACABQ because it takes into account the actual rate for international staff, which, in our view, is misleading and artificially created by constant delays in the recruitment process.

I would like to reiterate my country’s strong support for the allocation of adequate resources for programmatic activities and confidence-building projects, through which UNMIK

seeks to improve the current situation in the areas of key importance for the realization of its mandate, such as rule of law, human rights and reconciliation among communities.

Mr. Chair,

This issue is of utmost importance for my country and we look forward to engaging constructively with other delegations during the informal consultations on this agenda item.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.