

## DOCUMENTS\*

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# **Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo**

## **I. Introduction and Mission priorities**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), by which the Council decided to establish the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and requested that I report at regular intervals on the implementation of its mandate. It covers the activities of UNMIK, and developments related thereto, from 16 October 2012 to 15 January 2013.

2. The priorities of the Mission, to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and in the region, remain unchanged. In furtherance of its goals, UNMIK continues its constructive engagements with Pristina and Belgrade, the communities in Kosovo, and regional and international actors. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) continue to perform their roles within the framework of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). The European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) continues its presence in Kosovo in line with the statement by the President of the Security Council of 26 November 2008 (S/PRST/2008/44) and my report of 24 November 2008 (S/2008/692). The United Nations agencies, funds and programmes continue to work closely with the Mission.

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\* In view of fact that the text in this section are an official nature, no alternations of any kind have been made to them by the editor of the *Review of International Affairs*.

## **II. Political developments, including the European Union- facilitated dialogue**

3. On 19 October, a new phase was launched in the European Union-mediated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, with the convening of the first high-level meeting in Brussels between Prime Ministers Ivica Dačić and Hashim Thaçi, under the auspices of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The meeting elevated the process from a primarily technical level to a political one, offering new prospects for resolving various long-standing issues in the relationship between Belgrade and Pristina. The meeting of 19 October was followed by expanded discussions held on 7 November and 4 December.

4. During the 7 November meeting, the sides made progress in their discussions on the modalities for the implementation of earlier agreements, in particular the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points. They also agreed to a joint feasibility study for a new highway linking Pristina and Niš (Serbia).

5. During the 4 December meeting, agreements were reached on the dates, locations and other practical arrangements for the implementation of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points. The parties also agreed to appoint liaison officers, who would be based in the respective European Union delegation offices in Belgrade and Pristina. They also opened a discussion on the transparency of the financial support received by the Kosovo Serb communities from Belgrade and agreed to intensify cooperation on missing persons and to continue the work on energy and telecommunications.

6. Following extensive technical preparations, the high-level engagement between Belgrade and Pristina resulted in the start of the implementation of the agreement at four of the six crossing points, including at gates 1 (Jarinjë) and 31 (Bërnjak), in northern Kosovo, by the mutually agreed deadline of 31 December 2012.

7. On 13 January 2013, the National Assembly of Serbia adopted a resolution on basic principles for political talks with interim institutions of self-government in Kosovo-Metohija. The adoption was preceded by several months of discussions within Serbia on the Government “platform” outlining Belgrade’s positions on Kosovo. The resolution, among other things, expresses support for the European Union-led dialogue, with a view to achieving comprehensive and mutually acceptable solutions. In Pristina, the Kosovo authorities conducted broad-based internal consultations that resulted in a public statement, issued on 14 January, outlining Pristina’s positions on the key issues of the European Union-facilitated dialogue.

8. My Special Representative commended both sides for their demonstrated leadership and political courage in the dialogue process. Under his leadership, UNMIK continued to work closely with the communities on the ground and to collaborate with all other mandated international presences to enhance the prospects of success in the political dialogue.

### **III. Northern Kosovo and developments on the ground**

9. The developments in the high-level dialogue were accompanied by a number of incidents and some tensions on the ground. These were related to the temporary re-establishment of road blocks by Kosovo Serbs in the north of Kosovo in protest against some of the terms of the integrated management of crossing points agreement; the construction of housing for Kosovo Albanian returnees in northern Mitrovica; and problems with regard to the modalities for the travel of Serbian officials to Kosovo, which, among other things, led to the cancellation of the planned visit of Serbia's President, Tomislav Nikolić, to attend an Orthodox Christmas service at the Gračanica monastery.

10. The protestors and local Kosovo Serb political leaders demanded assurances from the Government of Serbia that the new procedures at the crossing point would not affect their ability to use Serbian vehicle registration plates and identification documents and that commercial goods destined for northern Kosovo would not be subject to taxes and customs fees. Following their meeting with the Serbian President and Prime Minister in Belgrade on 6 December, the Kosovo Serb political representatives announced that they had received such assurances and that they would suspend the protests. Nonetheless, on 9 December, on the eve of the start of the implementation of the integrated management of crossing points agreement at gate 1 in the north of Kosovo, some local Kosovo Serbs launched protests, blocking traffic and preventing the construction of the new check post at the gate from being completed.

11. On 10 December, the implementation of the agreement commenced at gate 1 in the north, where the integrated checkpoint is located on the northern side of the boundary line, and at gate 3 (Merdarë/Merdare), where it is located on the southern side. However, subsequent disputes concerning the collection of taxes and customs fees resulted in a resumption of the protest at gate 1. The issue was taken up by the technical working group in Brussels and a temporary arrangement was agreed, which specified that all goods bound for northern Kosovo would be exempt from customs fees and taxes, with the exception of excise goods (including fuel, tobacco and alcohol) in excess of 3.5 tons. However, northern Kosovo Serbs expressed dissatisfaction over the arrangement and continued to hold scheduled protests blocking the main roads three times a week for a period of two hours.

12. On 31 December, the implementation of the agreement also started at gates 5 (Konçulj/Dheu i Bardhë) and 31. In Zubin Potok, the Kosovo Serbs held another protest, from 30 December to 2 January, against the travel by land of Kosovo police and customs officers to gate 31. The officers continue to be transported regularly to the gate by EULEX helicopter.

13. In addition, Kosovo Serbs reacted strongly to returnee housing construction resumed by Kosovo Albanians in the Kroi i Vitakut/Brdjani neighbourhood of northern Mitrovica and Zvečan/Zvečan. The Kosovo Serbs alleged that many of

the returnees — who were beneficiaries of a government assistance and housing reconstruction programme — were not displaced former residents, as claimed by the Kosovo authorities, and were not in possession of valid construction permits. On 16 November, a group of Kosovo Serbs first blocked a secondary road and then the construction site itself, which led to a stand-off that escalated into stone throwing and resulted in a number of injured. Shots were also fired in the vicinity of the stand-off. The protestors were dispersed following an intervention by the Kosovo police who also provided a security escort for the construction workers to leave the site. Similar protests continued for a number of days, ending only after an agreement by the southern Mitrovica municipality to slow down the construction activities. Although the construction work has been halted altogether with the onset of winter, further negotiations and mediation will be required to reach a durable solution. UNMIK is working with other international presences to promote a broad consultative process that could lead to an agreement on the return process of internally displaced persons to northern Mitrovica.

14. My Special Representative continued to focus on ensuring coordination and cooperation among international presences with regard to northern Mitrovica. Such coordination has been important during the period after the cessation of salary payments from the Kosovo budget to municipal employees of the UNMIK Administration Mitrovica in July 2012, which followed the establishment by the Kosovo authorities of an administrative office in northern Mitrovica. In the absence of any indication that such payments would resume, UNMIK had no option but to serve notice to the local staff of the UNMIK Administration Mitrovica that their contracts would not be extended beyond their expiry date of 31 December 2012. UNMIK continues to engage with all local and international stakeholders in order to facilitate practical solutions, prevent tensions and allow the UNMIK Administration Mitrovica to continue to perform its conflict prevention, mediation and facilitation role.

#### **IV. Security**

15. The overall security situation remained generally calm, with the exception of northern Kosovo, especially in northern Mitrovica, where some serious incidents were reported.

16. Between 18 November and 7 December, three incidents affecting the staff of the administrative office in northern Mitrovica, its assets and projects occurred in northern Mitrovica. In other incidents occurring in December, three private vehicles reportedly belonging to Kosovo Serb police officers from the Mitrovica North station were set on fire. On 18 December, the private car of a Kosovo Serb member of the Serbian Parliament was burnt in front of his residence in Mitrovica. On the night of 9-10 January, an unknown perpetrator opened automatic fire on a bakery in northern Mitrovica belonging to a Kosovo Serb member of the Advisory Board of the UNMIK Administration Mitrovica. Each of these incidents is presently under investigation. Kosovo police, EULEX and

KFOR forces have increased their visibility and preventive efforts in response to such incidents.

17. The situation in the Kosovo Albanian majority areas south of the Ibër/Ibar River was generally calm. In response to an increase in armed robberies, bomb threats and the use of explosive devices, the Kosovo police conducted several operations to confiscate illegal weaponry.

18. On 7 January, the Kosovo police arrested 10 individuals, mostly northern Kosovo Serbs, during the Orthodox Christmas celebrations in Graçanicë/Gračanica for interfering with the Kosovo police escort of the Director of the Serbian Office for Kosovo and Metohija, refusing to provide identification, disobeying police orders and resisting arrest. They were released on 8 January, and all charges were subsequently rejected by the court. Nine of them alleged to having been beaten while in police custody. They were admitted to a hospital in northern Mitrovica; two of them, one reportedly with serious injuries, were sent to Belgrade for treatment. The Serbian authorities strongly protested the arrest and the alleged mistreatment of the detainees by the Kosovo police. EULEX and the Kosovo police Inspectorate are investigating the incident and the allegations.

19. The overall number of recorded incidents affecting minority communities has decreased, from 406 (2011) to 361 (2012). As occurred in 2011, the incidents in 2012 mainly concerned minor assaults, burglaries and thefts, arson committed on unoccupied properties and land, the illegal occupation of houses, and thefts and vandalism at religious sites. The most notable changes were a 21 per cent decrease in thefts and burglaries in 2012, compared with the previous year, and a more than 50 per cent increase in incidents of illegal woodcutting.

20. The trend in the Pejë/Pec region in the west of Kosovo has been of particular concern, with an increasing number of incidents affecting the Kosovo Serb community in Klinë/Klina and Istog/Istok municipalities. During 2012, 73 incidents, or 20 per cent of all incidents reported, occurred in those two municipalities. There is a perception among the local Kosovo Serbs that the intention behind the crimes was to force them to leave. There is also a perception that the Kosovo police is reluctant to actively investigate incidents that involve Kosovo Serbs, which led to the decision by Kosovo Serb residents of Istog/Istok to boycott the meetings of the local community safety council.

21. The Kosovo police has undertaken efforts to respond to those concerns, including through increased participation in the municipal community safety councils. It has also adopted a community policing and action plan for 2012-2016, which seeks to place the security of Kosovo citizens at the forefront of police efforts and to increase the effectiveness and accountability of the police service. In Zvečan/Zvečan, the acting Commander of the Kosovo police station, who had been suspended for allegedly failing to obey an order to arrest the Head of the Government of Serbia's Office for Kosovo and Metohija, Aleksandar

Vulin, during the latter's visit to northern Kosovo, returned to duty on 21 December.

### **V. Rule of law**

22. UNMIK continued to monitor activities and exercise relevant responsibilities, in close coordination with EULEX, in the area of rule of law, and technical cooperation with the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs of Kosovo and the Ministry of Justice of Serbia.

23. UNMIK also continued to receive requests for mutual legal assistance from Serbia and non-recognizing countries. The impasse between the Ministry of Justice of Kosovo and the Ministry of Justice of Serbia on mutual legal assistance persists, with the Kosovo Ministry failing to process Serbian Ministry documents received via UNMIK and the Serbian Ministry failing to process any documents received directly from the Kosovo Ministry. UNMIK continues to direct all requests for mutual legal assistance from non-recognizing countries to EULEX for transmission to the Kosovo Ministry of Justice. The agreement on mutual legal assistance, signed on 12 August 2011 between EULEX and the Ministry of Justice of Kosovo, whereby the latter agreed to process requests received through EULEX from non-recognizing States, is being implemented with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia and Greece.

24. UNMIK continued to facilitate the interaction of Kosovo with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and its member States on a daily basis. UNMIK participated in the INTERPOL General Assembly session held in Rome from 5 to 8 November 2012. Following close consultations with EULEX, the UNMIK delegation conducted several meetings with INTERPOL representatives to resolve outstanding issues concerning notices from Serbia and other issues.

25. UNMIK continued to support and encourage progress on the issue of missing persons, an issue discussed during the 7 November high-level meeting held in Brussels. UNMIK participated in the Belgrade-Pristina Working Group on Missing Persons that met in Belgrade on 30 October under the chairmanship of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Both the Belgrade and Pristina delegations noted difficulties in identifying sources of new information, but agreed to intensify their efforts and enhance mutual coordination. During 2012, forensic experts working at the EULEX Department of Forensic Medicine identified the remains of 38 missing persons. A total of 51 such identifications were made during 2011.

26. On 7 and 8 November 2012, UNMIK organized a joint visit to Cyprus by Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb family associations of missing persons in coordination with the Cypriot Committee on Missing Persons. The visit was funded by the Government of Serbia and Kosovo authorities. After the visit, joint recommendations were drafted stressing the importance of local ownership and of involving family associations in all discussions and decisions on the matter.

27. UNMIK continued to provide document-certification services both to Kosovo residents and at the request of non-recognizing States, primarily for the certification of civil status and pension documents. The implementation of an agreement on university diplomas, reached during the technical talks held between Belgrade and Pristina on 21 and 22 November 2011, is ongoing. Meanwhile, UNMIK continues to provide certification of certain types of educational documents.

28. A major reform of the Kosovo courts and judiciary began on 1 January 2013, when a new Law on Courts, Law on the State Prosecutor, Law on the Kosovo Judicial Council, Law on the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council and Law on the Special Prosecutorial Office came into force. It was accompanied by a reform of the Criminal Code and of the Criminal Procedure Code. All minor offences will fall under the jurisdiction of the newly established Basic Courts that replace the former Municipal and District Courts. The Basic Courts will be the first instance courts for minor and criminal offences, unless otherwise regulated by law. The new Criminal Procedure Code no longer allows for criminal offences to be prosecuted by private or subsidiary prosecution. Beginning on 1 January 2013, such offences are to be prosecuted *ex officio*. Other substantial changes include the removal of the confirmation of the indictment procedure.

29. Allegations of corruption continue to be a serious concern in Kosovo, while efforts to prosecute cases seem to be yielding some results. During the reporting period, a deputy prime minister, two former ministers, two magistrates, two mayors and other civil servants were either under investigation or indicted on allegations of corruption. In one prominent case, in November, EULEX and Kosovo police arrested three suspects on charges of corruption-related offences, including fraud and aggravated theft related to illegally received payments of some €1.4 million from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, intended as payment to the Austrian State Printing Company for production of biometric passports.

30. Public perception surveys, undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a regular basis during 2012, showed decreasing public satisfaction with Kosovo's executive, legislative and judicial institutions, and identified corruption as one of the top concerns of the public. A number of laws have been drafted in efforts to strengthen the fight against corruption, including the Law on Declaration and Origin of Wealth of Senior Public Officials and the Law on Confiscation of Property Acquired by Criminal Offense.

31. During the reporting period, there was an increase in complaints concerning the failure by local police and prosecutors to investigate crimes affecting minorities. My Special Representative conducted a number of meetings with relevant authorities and consulted closely with EULEX in an effort to encourage greater responsiveness and cooperation between interested parties in cases affecting minority communities.

32. On 20 November, the Supreme Court of Kosovo, presided over by EULEX judges, reviewed the appeal of a EULEX prosecutor against the acquittal of

Democratic Party of Kosovo Vice-President Fatmir Limaj and three others on charges of war crimes in what is known as the “Kleçkë/Klečka case”. The Court found the previously excluded evidence to be admissible and ordered a retrial of Limaj, a former high-ranking commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and Government Minister, and his three co-defendants. On 24 November, all the defendants were detained on remand. This provoked strong public reactions, including from Prime Minister Thaçi and other political leaders, who called for a parliamentary review of the EULEX mandate.

33. On 29 November, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia acquitted Ramush Haradinaj, the former Prime Minister of Kosovo and KLA regional commander, following his retrial on charges of war crimes related to the 1998-1999 conflict in Kosovo. Co-defendants Idriz Balaj and Lahi Brahimaj were also acquitted. Upon his release, Haradinaj returned to Kosovo and resumed his role as the leader of the opposition Alliance for the Future of Kosovo party. He also began discussions with the ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo concerning a possible future coalition.

## **VI. Returns and communities**

34. Most municipal community committees in Kosovo continued to function and ensure that essential aid, including transportation, food, hygienic items and firewood, were made available to those in need. Several municipalities also amended their statutes to incorporate the regulation on the establishment of the municipal office for communities and returns.

35. The voluntary returns process continues to be slow. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) registered 239 individual voluntary minority returnees during the last three months of 2012, including 61 Kosovo Serbs, 26 Kosovo Albanians, 103 members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, 39 Kosovo Bosniaks, 9 Kosovo Goranis and 1 Montenegrin.

36. During 2012, UNHCR recorded 970 voluntary returns of minorities to Kosovo, compared with the 1,143 recorded during 2011. The comparative breakdown of such returns by minority ethnic group for 2012 and 2011 is as follows, respectively: Serbs (302/464); Roma (125/120); Ashkali and Egyptian (305/395); Bosniak (84/60); Gorani (89/106); Albanian to minority areas (62/27); Turk (none/1); Croat (2/none); and Montenegrin (1/9).

37. The number of internally displaced persons in Kosovo stood at 17,738 as at the end of December 2012, including 921 living in collective centres.

38. UNHCR has organized four “go-and-see” visits for internally displaced persons, mostly Kosovo Serbs and members of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, in Serbia and within Kosovo as well as for refugees from Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The visits highlighted the importance of dialogue between potential returnees and receiving communities in order to resolve issues, mostly related to property, vandalism and



theft. Some progress was also made in the provision of municipal support for housing construction and refurbishment, as well as in the implementation of the UNHCR return and reintegration project.

39. As at the end of 2012, Kosovo had received 121 refugees and 45 requests for individual asylum — a relative decrease from 2011. Seventeen asylum seekers are currently awaiting decisions on their claims by the Kosovo authorities.

40. In 2012, UNHCR provided assistance to 2,499 individuals in obtaining personal documentation and resolving civil status issues. The United Nations Population Fund also supported the Kosovo authorities in improving interministerial coordination on that issue.

41. Municipal community safety councils, established to maintain safety in ethnically mixed areas, continued to meet regularly, with the exception of Istog/Istok, where, as mentioned earlier, Kosovo Serb residents suspended their participation in the local council and other municipal bodies, pending progress in the investigations by the Kosovo police of cases where local Kosovo Serbs and their property had been targeted.

42. During the reporting period, the Serbian authorities announced that the continued payment of salaries to employees of Belgrade-sponsored institutions in Kosovo would be contingent upon discontinuation of their employment by Kosovo institutions. This decision primarily affected the employees of the Belgrade-financed educational institutions. According to the instruction, all such employees had to declare their decision to remain on either the Serbian or the Kosovo payroll. The majority of the Kosovo Serbs concerned preferred to remain on the Government of Serbia payroll, which also provides relatively higher wages.

43. Kosovo Serbs continued to report difficulties in registering their vehicles, often due to missing Kosovo civil documents or lengthy bureaucratic procedures. The Kosovo Ministry of Internal Affairs conducted registration awareness campaigns in Kosovo Serb areas and, as a stop-gap measure, began issuing interim license plates to Kosovo Serbs whose registration documents were still under verification.

44. On 12 December, the lead-contaminated camp Osterode in northern Mitrovica was officially closed. The camp had hosted hundreds of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian internally displaced persons over the past decade. The majority of them have been resettled into the Roma Mahala neighbourhood in southern Mitrovica or into an ethnically mixed neighbourhood in northern Mitrovica.

45. During 2012, with support from the United Nations Children's Fund, the education centre in the Leposaviq/Leposavić camp for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian internally displaced persons supported the inclusion of children in the regular education system through preschool education activities. More than 10,000 nutrition supplements were also distributed to children to alleviate the effects of exposure to lead contamination.

46. UNMIK continued its field activities, focused especially on minority communities, in order to facilitate resolution of issues at the community level and to enhance the prospects for reconciliation. UNMIK has donated its surplus equipment — vehicles, computers and other items — to support vulnerable communities. Vehicles were also donated to the Kosovo police operating in the Mitrovica region.

### **VII. Cultural and religious heritage**

47. UNMIK continued to facilitate the activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Kosovo. The fresco restoration at the Bogorodica Ljeviška Church in Prizren, funded by donations from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy and the Russian Federation, has been completed. Reconstruction work, funded by the Russian Federation, at three UNESCO cultural heritage sites, the Visoki Dečani Monastery, the Gračanica Monastery and the Peć Patriarchate, have also been completed. The tender for restoration of the Church of Dormition of Theotokos at the Gračanica Monastery has been finalized and work is expected to begin in the spring.

48. KFOR continues to provide on-site protection at the Visoki Dečani Monastery and the Peć Patriarchate. Other Orthodox patrimonial sites are now under the protection of the Kosovo police.

49. Despite the incidents surrounding the Orthodox Christmas celebrations, and growing concerns about the state of religious tolerance, constructive interaction took place between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the local authorities in Pejë/Peć municipality. They engaged in practical dialogue on a range of issues, and the local mayors were regularly invited to attend religious events. The Serbian Orthodox Church has established a study, research and documentation centre in the Peć Patriarchate, which has held several inter-faith academic and educational events, to which the Mayor of Pejë/Peć offered support in order to promote peace and reconciliation among local communities.

50. At the same time, in Deçan/Dečani, the resolution of a long-standing property dispute by a 27 December decision of the Special Chamber of the Supreme Court of Kosovo, which rejected the claims of two socially owned enterprises against Serbia and the Visoki Dečani Monastery, resulted in aggressive reactions by the local municipal leadership and suspension of their relations with the Monastery. This action caused a significant setback in the delicate efforts to build better relations and understanding between the monastic community and the citizenry in Deçan/Dečani.

51. The majority of the traditional annual visits of hundreds of Kosovo Serb pilgrims and displaced persons to churches and cemeteries for Orthodox All Souls' Day and annual patron saint days were well secured by the Kosovo police and conducted without significant incidents.

52. During the Orthodox Christmas, however, the number of pilgrims visiting Kosovo for services was significantly lower than in previous years, following announcements by some Kosovo Albanian activist groups of their intention to organize protests during the Christmas services.

53. On 6 January, the Orthodox Christmas Eve, some 20 activists of the opposition movement Vetëvendosje, along with eight members of the local association of missing persons, Voice of Mothers, attempted to block the entrance to the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary for some 40 pilgrims, mostly displaced Kosovo Serbs from Gjakovë/Đakovica who currently reside in Serbia. However, the Kosovo police secured the entrance to the Church, which allowed the pilgrims to attend the services. There were almost no visits in 2013 to the Visoki Dečani Monastery during Orthodox Christmas.

54. Incidents of vandalism of religious sites and other forms of religious intolerance continued to be reported, including property damage and theft at Orthodox churches, as well as desecration of graves in Orthodox cemeteries. Twelve religious sites, including 5 churches and 7 graveyards were targets of theft and vandalism. On 15 January, over 50 Serbian Orthodox gravestones were found damaged in the cemetery in Nakarade village in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipality. While the incident was publicly condemned by the local mayor, and a suspect subsequently arrested by the Kosovo police, both the Kosovo Serb community and the Serbian Orthodox Church expressed concerns that this might mark an increasing trend in such instances. My Special Representative condemned the incident and called for a proactive response by the local authorities.

### **VIII. Human rights**

55. A delegation of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities visited Kosovo from 2 to 7 December. During a final meeting with the representatives of the international community, the delegation observed that despite the existence of an adequate legal framework, its enforcement remained weak.

56. Under the coordination of UNMIK and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Human Rights International Contact Group and its two subgroups, namely, on security incidents affecting non-majority communities and on property rights, continued to strengthen their coordination in monitoring human rights trends and advocating remedial action.

57. In October, the Advisory Office on Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunity and Gender Issues of the Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo launched a midterm review of the 2009-2015 Strategy and Action Plan on Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities, which has seen little implementation to date. The review is being carried out through a participatory process, involving local and international actors, including UNMIK.

58. On the anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on 31 October, Kosovo authorities, UNMIK, international organizations and civil society representatives participated in a meeting funded by the European Union Office in Kosovo and EULEX to assess the progress and challenges in the implementation of the resolution in Kosovo. The drafting of a Kosovo action plan for the implementation of the resolution is advancing, with a special focus on addressing violence against women.

59. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) facilitated a dialogue in Istanbul in December among women leaders that involved parliamentarians from Kosovo and Serbia, members from six countries of the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeast Europe, and civil society representatives. The participants pledged to continue organizing joint events in Serbia and Kosovo, as well as a regional conference on women in politics.

60. UN-Women also organized a high level round table, with the participation of Kosovo authorities, UNMIK and other international representatives, on the status of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Challenges continue to exist to the effective investigation and prosecution of sexual violence-related war crimes in Kosovo. For example, the applied Law on the Status and the Rights of the Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans and Members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Civilian Victims of War and their Families does not explicitly include the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and torture as a category.

61. On 14 December, an organized group violently disrupted the launch of the latest edition of the biannual journal *Kosovo 2.0*, which focuses on sexuality, including homosexuality, in the Western Balkans. The violence was condemned by the Kosovo authorities, UNMIK, representatives of international organizations and diplomatic offices, as well as non-governmental organizations. Four Special Rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council addressed a letter of concern to my Special Representative, which he transmitted to the Prime Minister of Kosovo. On 16 December, four individuals broke into the premises of a non-governmental organization working on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues and attacked one of its members. The website of an international non-governmental organization that condemned the attack was hacked and shut down. The Kosovo police have formed a specialized task force to investigate those incidents.

62. In December, a representative of the Advisory Office on Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunity and Gender Issues informed that the Government had abandoned its action plan for the implementation of the Anti-Discrimination Law in favour of considering amendments to the Law. This constitutes a major success for civil society and international organizations, including OHCHR, which advocated amendments of the Law to ensure its more effective implementation.

### **IX. Observations**

63. An essential step forward was achieved with the elevation of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue to a high political level under the stewardship of the European Union. I commend the leaders on both sides for embarking upon this challenging yet vital political process, aimed at resolving the most difficult issues hampering progress in their mutual relations. I wish to express my appreciation to the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union for personally facilitating the high-level talks.

64. I am heartened by the practical and constructive atmosphere that has characterized the high-level engagement so far and by the early results, which have already become visible on the ground. While many difficult issues still lie ahead, the resumption of talks is a strong signal of the commitment by both sides to peaceful dialogue and overcoming the burdens of the past conflict. I strongly encourage Belgrade and Pristina to sustain the momentum and commitment in the face of challenges that may emerge in addressing some of the most sensitive unresolved issues.

65. I also commend the international presences for working in concert to seize the opportunities created by this new political initiative, and to address practical problems on the ground in the framework of their respective mandates. Events during the reporting period demonstrate both the continuing fragility of the situation on the ground and the potential for continued stabilization, provided there is sustained political leadership and good will.

66. With regard to the situation in northern Mitrovica, coordinated action and attention are needed to ensure that the difficult issues are addressed in good faith in order to avert future tensions and that essential municipal services continue to be provided to the local population. In that context, it is regrettable that the expectation to pay the salaries of civil servants employed at UNMIK Administration Mitrovica has not been met. The political dialogue and local mediation efforts should be used to help to avoid any escalation of the situation and to promote consensual and durable solutions.

67. Of equal importance to the high level political process, are sustained and well-grounded efforts to promote reconciliation and to increase trust among the communities in Kosovo. The international presences play a vital role in promoting this objective. However, its achievement also requires commitment and sincere efforts by the political leadership at all levels, local non-governmental organizations and civil society. In difficult economic times, these challenges are yet greater. However, active efforts at both political and community levels are required for progress to be achieved towards a more prosperous and secure future.

68. Acts of intolerance, such as those that occurred during the Orthodox Christmas holiday in 2013, do no justice to the aspirations of Kosovo society and should be met by firm and effective responses by the Kosovo authorities. I renew my call for unity among responsible actors to positively influence the situation on

the ground in Kosovo, and for unambiguous support for the path of peaceful progress through dialogue, the only path leading towards lasting stability and prosperity.

69. I express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Farid Zarif, for his leadership of UNMIK and his efforts to promote consensus solutions and to deepen cooperation among the key stakeholders. I commend the staff of UNMIK for their commitment and efforts to fulfil the responsibilities and objectives of the United Nations.

70. I conclude by extending my gratitude to the long-standing partners of the United Nations in Kosovo — KFOR/NATO, the European Union and OSCE, as well as the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes — for their support and close cooperation with UNMIK.