

[Extract]

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[...]

The situation in Kosovo

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Mr. de Vengoechea (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, let me thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, and Mr. Skënder Hyseni for their statements. We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, for his briefing. We would like to commend the personnel of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for their excellent work. It is thanks to them that, after the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999), there has been relative peace and stability in the region. As stated in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/692), current realities in Kosovo make it impossible for UNMIK to discharge most of its mandate. Panama therefore supports and continues to support the reconfiguration of the Mission. Panama is in favour of the deployment of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) to take charge, under the legal authority of UNMIK, of United Nations responsibilities in Kosovo.

We are doing so in keeping with our position that regional organizations should play a priority role in resolving the problems in their own regions. The actions of the Secretary-General and the European Union (EU) are particularly appropriate,

given that the Council cannot achieve a consensus on the matter and that resolution 1244 (1999) has no set time frame. Nevertheless, since this is an undesired situation, although the best we can achieve, the international community must do everything in its power to ensure that Serbia is part of the solution to the Kosovo issue.

That is why we commend the Secretary-General having instructed his Special Representative to engage in negotiations with Belgrade on matters of such importance to Serbians and Kosovars in order to have the cooperation of both with regard to the reconfiguration of UNMIK and the deployment of EULEX. We are gratified by the outcome of the discussions between the United Nations and Belgrade, since Belgrade's endorsement is indispensable to the success of any international initiative in Kosovo. That is why we commend the presidential statement that has recently been circulated concerning the report of the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that we have no doubt that the future of Serbia and Kosovo lie in European integration. That is why we urge leaders in Serbia and Kosovo to leave behind the nationalist rhetoric of the past that has caused so much suffering to their peoples. Let them, instead, turn their eyes to a European future, where both peoples can resolve their differences, where national borders and belonging to one group or another will be less important and where a spirit of cooperation and social and economic development will prevail.