

Speech: Call to refocus the UN Mission in Kosovo

Updated: professional title for Stephen Hickey should read “coordinator” and not “counsellor”

Thank you Madame President. And thank you SRSB Tanin for your briefing.

Madame President, in February, the UK celebrated ten years of diplomatic relations with Kosovo. In the same month, the European Commission adopted a strategy for ‘A credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans’. Kosovo’s opportunity here was not overlooked – through implementation of the Stabilisation and Association agreement, Kosovo has the opportunity to progress on its European path.

We welcome the significant milestones that Kosovo has reached since our last meeting, including the ratification of the Border Demarcation Agreement with Montenegro. Good neighbourly relations are a key feature of any European democracy, and are crucial for stability in the wider Balkans region.

We encourage both Serbia and Kosovo to continue to make progress towards a sustainable solution through the EU-Facilitated Dialogue. Progress is vital for stability, security and prosperity in the region, as well as in the two countries themselves. Provocative acts and rhetoric from both sides are deeply unhelpful and antagonistic.

Our priority in Kosovo remains strengthening the Rule of Law, and the challenges still remain. We welcome President Thaci’s public commitment to uphold Kosovo’s obligations through the Specialist Chambers. We also welcome the speedy appointment of Jack Smith as Kosovo’s Specialist Prosecutor, and the continuity this provides in the Specialist Chambers’ pursuit of justice for victims.

We note that Prime Minister Haradinaj has requested a review into the arrest and deportation of Turkish nationals. As a supporter of democratic values, Kosovo must continue to prioritise the Rule of Law and respect for international human rights in all its institutions.

Madame President, the investigation into the death of Oliver Ivanovic is clearly ongoing. We have been clear in our expectation that Kosovo’s rule of law institutions will lead a thorough and full investigation to bring those responsible to justice at the earliest opportunity. But equally, we expect Serbia to refrain from any provocations that could heighten tensions and support investigative efforts in an open and constructive manner.

Madame President, the hard work and dedication of thousands of UNMIK personnel has helped bring peace to Kosovo. The current situation is in part a result of their work. We also recognise Kosovo’s commitment to peace, stability, reconciliation and prosperity and the UK will continue to be a

proud supporter of Kosovo as it strives to achieve its full potential.

Madame President, given the scale of the threats to international peace and security around the world right now, and the relative stability and progress on the ground in Kosovo, it is clearly inappropriate and inefficient for this Council to spend so much of its time discussing the situation in Kosovo and devoting so much resources to it. The United Kingdom joins other European members of this Council in firmly believing that the situation in Kosovo allows for a substantial reduction in the current cycle in reports and meetings. We further believe that the Security Council must refocus UNMIK's efforts so that the means deployed by the United Nations are tailored fully to the situation on the ground. To this end, we look forward to a strategic review of the mission in due course.

Thank you Madame President.