MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

INFORMATION AND PRESS DEPARTMENT

Statement by Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Kosovo

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On February 17, Kosovo’s Provisional Institutions of Self-Government declared a unilateral proclamation of independence of the province, thus violating the sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia, the Charter of the United Nations, UNSCR 1244, the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, Kosovo’s Constitutional Framework and the high-level Contact Group accords. Russia fully supports the reaction of the Serbian leadership to the events in Kosovo and its just demands to restore the territorial integrity of the country.

We expect the UN Mission in Kosovo and NATO-led Kosovo Force will take immediate action to fulfill their mandates as authorized by the Security Council, including voiding the decisions of Pristina's self-governing institutions and adopting severe administrative measures against them. Russia calls for the immediate convocation of an emergency UN Security Council meeting to examine the situation and take resolute and effective measures for a return to the political settlement process in accordance with the provisions of UNSCR 1244.

It is impossible not to be aware that the decisions by the Kosovo leadership create the risk of an escalation of tension and inter-ethnic violence in the province and of new conflict in the Balkans. The international community should respond responsibly to this challenge. Those who are considering supporting separatism should understand what dangerous consequences their actions threaten to have for world order, international stability and the authority of the UN Security Council's decisions that took decades to build.

February 17, 2008
18 February 2008, Brussels - EU Council Conclusions on Kosovo, 2851st External Relations Council meeting

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"On 17 February 2008 the Kosovo Assembly adopted a resolution which declares Kosovo to be independent. The Council takes note that the resolution commits Kosovo to the principles of democracy and equality of all its citizens, the protection of the Serb and other minorities, the protection of the cultural and religious heritage and international supervision. The Council welcomes the continued presence of the international community based on UN Security Council resolution 1244. The Council notes that Member States will decide, in accordance with national practice and international law, on their relations with Kosovo.

The Council recalls the European Union's longstanding commitment to the stability of the Western Balkans region. The Council reiterates the European Union's readiness to play a leading role in strengthening stability in the region, and recalls the European Union's commitments contained in the conclusions of the European Council of 14 December 2007, as well as the agreement to Joint Actions establishing an ESDP Police and Rule of Law mission and appointing an EU Special Representative in Kosovo. The European Union will continue to cooperate with the UN, KFOR, OSCE and other international actors in order to preserve stability in the region. The Council reaffirms its commitment to fully and effectively support the European perspective for the Western Balkans. It asks the Commission to use community instruments to promote economic and political development and to propose to the broader region concrete measures in order to advance in that direction.

The Council reiterates the EU's adherence to the principles of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, inter alia the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity and all UN Security Council resolutions. It underlines its conviction that in view of the conflict of the 1990s and the extended period of international administration under SCR 1244, Kosovo constitutes a sui generis case which does not call into question these principles and resolutions."
Strasbourg, 18 February 2008
Statement by the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, on Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence

Ladies and gentlemen,

Colleagues,

Yesterday, the Kosovo Assembly proclaimed Kosovo’s independence. The decision had been expected and reflects the will of the citizens in Kosovo to take their political destiny and institution-building for independence into their own hands in a peaceful fashion.

About a year ago, following the Ahtisaari report, the European Parliament advocated internationally supervised sovereignty for Kosovo. Negotiations between Belgrade and Priština were extremely difficult and, regrettably, did not lead to a politically satisfactory solution for all parties. As is often the case in politics, there was no magic formula! The heavy burden of recent history has contributed to this; but the development in Kosovo is not a precedent. The position of Kosovo as a UN protectorate is unique; it is a special case without parallel.

I would appeal to all parties in this situation to remain calm and collected. I am convinced that everyone - Serbs and Albanians alike in Kosovo - wants stability and prosperity in the region above all. That is also the priority objective of the European Union and the European Parliament. It is our job and obligation to encourage those in positions of political responsibility in Kosovo to shoulder their responsibility and establish democratic political institutions which respect the rights and freedoms of all citizens as part of a multiethnic Kosovo that has good neighbourly relations with its neighbours. In this context, I also welcome the Council’s decision to dispatch the ‘EULEX Kosovo’ mission headed up by Yves de Kermabon. It will be this mission’s specific task to assist the Kosovars in the area of the law and policing in order to ensure a smooth transition. I also welcome the appointment of Pieter Feith as the EU’s Special Representative in. This demonstrates the clear and unanimous commitment of the EU and the will to do something tangible for lasting stability in the Balkans. Moreover, I am confident that the decisions to be taken by the General Affairs Council at its meeting this afternoon will be wise and shrewd.

The countries of the western Balkans have a European perspective. They will not be able to accede in the near future; but each of the countries has that perspective. Accordingly, in the process, we should help people both in Serbia and in Kosovo to overcome their differences from a European integration perspective, as has taken place elsewhere in Europe. The debate scheduled for Wednesday is a first opportunity to do so.