

UNMIK

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

UNMIK/PR/243

17 May 2000

Kosovo Transitional Council Briefed About Civil Registration

PRISTINA---SRSG Bernard Kouchner today expressed his outrage at and condemnation of the “shocking” murder of Petar Topoljski, an UNMIK staff member of Serbian ethnicity, and said that this was a terrible blow to the family and friends of Mr. Topoljski as well as all the UNMIK staff.

Speaking at the Kosovo Transitional Council meeting today morning, Dr. Kouchner said UNMIK had tried to create the conditions of security for all the staff, but those determined to carry out their dastardly aims had succeeded. He told the Council that he had visited Gracanica yesterday and met Mr. Topoljski’s mother and expressed his heartfelt sympathies and condolences to her. Today he met Serb staffers of UNMIK and assured them that he would make all efforts to ensure their security.

He reiterated his commitment to bringing those responsible for the murder to justice, adding that he realised that it would take time to curb this kind of violence in Kosovo but UNMIK was working towards that aim.

Dr. Kouchner also briefed the members of the KTC on his Zurich trip last week, where he met with the Minister Justice of Switzerland and Minister of Interior of Germany to discuss the return of the Kosovars from the two countries. He noted that the two countries had been very generous in giving asylum to the people of Kosovo in time of need, but cautioned against massive returns which could create social and economic problems. He said the two Ministers agreed to work with UNMIK on an orderly repatriation.

The deputy to the Head of Civil Administration (Pillar II), Gerard Fischer, briefed the KTC on the delays being experienced in the registration process. A three-month period, from April 17 to July 11, had been foreseen to register the entire population over 16 years of age. But the turnout in the first month has not been high enough to meet the July deadline. Mr. Fischer said 199 sites would be eventually opened, of which 170 were already functioning. Forty sites were available in Pristina. So far, only 150,000 people had registered, which is approximately 10 per cent of the total.

Mr. Fischer appealed to the KTC members to set the example and register themselves, which would encourage the population to follow their example. The OSCE added that 80 per cent

of the registration review cases were being resolved by referring to relevant documents in the various municipalities.

The members of the KTC made many useful suggestions on speeding up the process and agreed to make a special effort to encourage and urge Kosovars to register and vote.

Ms Barbara Davis, Chief of Mission of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, also briefed the KTC. Referring to the recent statement on tolerance issued by the KTC, she said, "it was a concrete step in the process of locating missing and detained persons". She said her organisation had established offices in three cities, Pristina, Podgorica and Belgrade, where personnel were on duty 24 hours to deal with issues related to the missing persons. The phone numbers of these centres are: Pristina—038 549 053; Podgorica---081 612 884 and Belgrade---011 318 5828.

There was a long discussion on the issue of delay in the appointment of the Special Envoy for the missing and the detained persons. The KTC members urged that this process be speeded up. They were assured that action would soon be taken in this regard.

KFOR and UNMIK Police briefed the KTC on the security situation in Kosovo in the last week, which had witnessed a decrease in certain crimes compared to the previous week. However, there was an increase in murder cases from four to seven. KFOR noted that the security situation in Vitina was starting to improve following last week's violence and that Mitrovica remained calm but tense because of the daily demonstration connected with hunger strike of the detainees in the Mitrovica detention centre.