



United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

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IAC Discusses Work Of Judiciary in Kosovo

PRISTINA---PDSRSG Jock Covey today said that there was no textbook solution to building up judiciary in Kosovo in the present extraordinary circumstances.

Speaking at the Interim Administrative Council meeting today, which received a detailed briefing on judiciary, Mr. Covey stated that the resolution of the issue of applicable law had led to a loss of valuable time. "But a lot had been achieved now and we are on the right track."

About international judges, PDSRSG said they were here to co-operate and work with the local judiciary. It was an interim measure to get the judicial process moving, he added.

Mr. Fernando Castanon, Acting Director of the Administrative Department of Justice, briefed the IAC about the efforts to build a judiciary in Kosovo. He said the department had re-established the Supreme Court of Kosovo, five district courts, 17 municipal courts, one commercial court, 19 minor offences courts and 13 offices of public prosecutors. He said as of this week, 274 judges and prosecutors and 628 support staff had been appointed in the various judicial institutions of Kosovo. Over the coming weeks, Mr. Castanon said the full complement of 420 judges and prosecutors will be appointed.

He said that the department had provided a significant material aid to the judicial system in Kosovo.

Pointing to the ethnic problems, he said UNMIK had been forced to recognize that until now the judges and prosecutors here have faced a certain amount of pressure in specific circumstances. The appointment of international judges and international prosecutors in Kosovo and the eventual establishment of a Kosovo War and Ethnic Crimes Court (KWECC) are important elements in the establishment of rule-of-law. He emphasized that KWECC will be a local court, in which both local and international judicial personnel will participate. Thus far four international judges and one international prosecutor have been appointed in the District Courts of Mitrovica, Gnjilane and Pristina.

Regarding the correctional administration, Mr. Castanon pointed out that three correctional facilities in Dubrova (Istok), Prizren and Lipjan, were under its charge. The Lipjan was exclusively for women and juvenile detainees. The detention centres in Gnjilane, Peja, Mitrovica and Pristina were currently under UNMIK Police or KFOR and all of them will be handed over to the Department in the near future.

An intense discussion followed this presentation, and the Albanian leaders raised questions about investigations of crimes and expressed concern about the fact that many criminal acts were going unpunished. While appreciating the difficult work being done by the Department, the members asked questions about the criteria for the appointment of local and international judges and prosecutors. They asked about the KWECC and its role. They said more efforts should be made to prevent crimes and urged that crimes should be investigated more rigorously.