Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Current situation in Kosovo

Recommendation 1708 (2005)

Reply from the Committee of Ministers
adopted at the 947th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (23 November 2005)

1. The Committee of Ministers shares the conviction of the Parliamentary Assembly that the Council of Europe's role in "improving good governance, strengthening democracy and the rule of law and raising human rights standards in "new democracies" contributes to laying down solid foundations for closer European political integration". For this reason, the Committee of Ministers follows very closely the developments in Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro) and strongly supports a continuing role of the Council of Europe in the construction of a multi-ethnic, democratic and stable society in Kosovo, within the framework of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), in which human rights are effectively respected and protected without any discrimination, along the broad lines suggested by the Parliamentary Assembly.

2. With regard to item 5 (i) of the Parliamentary Assembly's recommendation, the Committee of Ministers fully supports the principle of dialogue, first and foremost between the communities of Kosovo, through the political actors and civil society. In that spirit, the Committee has steadily encouraged representatives of those communities, in particular the Kosovo Serbs, to actively participate in the political process in Kosovo. Moreover, the Council of Europe has established and supports the Pristina school of politics and a variety of inter-community initiatives through, in particular, its Confidence Building Measures, Democratic Leadership Programme and support to local efforts for transborder co-operation between municipalities.

3. The Committee of Ministers also agrees on the need to encourage a fruitful dialogue between the parties concerned, including where appropriate through direct talks. It strongly believes that steady progress on standard-implementation and meaningful decentralisation will be crucial and would help strengthen such dialogue.

4. Furthermore, the Committee of Ministers draws attention to the report of Ambassador Kai Eide, the Special Envoy of the United Nations for a Comprehensive Review of the implementation of standards for Kosovo, which was issued on 7 October 2005. It notes that during the preparation of this report, on 31 August 2005, Ambassador Eide held informal consultations with the Secretary General on questions of standards related to the Council of Europe's fields of expertise and areas of intervention in Kosovo. The Committee is of the opinion that the Council of Europe standards and mechanisms, notably in the fields of human rights and the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, will have an important role to play in the future status process. In this context, it notes with satisfaction that the Eide report stresses the fact that Kosovo is located in Europe, where strong regional organisations exist, and that the latter will have the most prominent role to play in Kosovo in the future.

5. With regard to item 5 (ii) of the Parliamentary Assembly's recommendation, the Committee of Ministers intends to review the case for re-inforced Council of Europe action in Kosovo in the light of the comprehensive review of the situation made by Ambassador Eide and the decision by the United Nations Security Council of 24 October 2005 fully supporting the start of the political process for determining Kosovo's future status. The Committee of Ministers will continue to follow the process and carefully consider the most appropriate means for the Council of Europe to sustain its engagement.

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6. In reply to item 5 (iii) of the Parliamentary Assembly's recommendation, the Committee of Ministers is fully aware of the crucial importance for the future of Kosovo of the sustainability of the returns process and shares the disappointment of the Parliamentary Assembly regarding the lack of real progress in this process. Taking into account the fact that this process falls primarily within the mandate and expertise of the UNHCR and UNMIK in this field, the Secretariat of the Council of Europe is in close communication with those organisations and the Committee of Ministers will continue to follow this issue closely and will certainly support and promote their initiatives in this regard.

7. With regard to item 5 (iv) of the recommendation, the Committee of Ministers informs the Parliamentary Assembly that the Co-ordinator on Roma activities has conducted a preliminary assessment visit on the humanitarian conditions of Roma IDPs in Kosovo from 22 to 23 August, principally examining the situation in Mitrovicë/a. Additionally, a fact-finding mission of the Chair of MG-S-ROM is foreseen in the coming weeks.