

**STATEMENT BY CAROLINE ZIADEH
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AND HEAD OF UNMIK
SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON UNMIK**

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Mr President,

Excellencies,

M. Le Président, je me permets de vous féliciter pour votre présidence du Conseil de sécurité pour le mois d'octobre. Dans la région où la MINUK est déployée, ce mois est caractérisé par des échéances cruciales concernant le dialogue entre Belgrade et Pristina. C'est le cas notamment de la feuille de route sur l'Energie et les plaques d'immatriculation avec des délais immédiats, ainsi que de nombreuses discussions à plusieurs niveaux européens sur de multiples dossiers ayant trait aux perspectives européennes de la Serbie et du Kosovo, qui auront un impact non seulement sur la vie des populations de cette région mais aussi sur l'environnement politique et sécuritaire dans lequel évolue la Mission.

I am honoured to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General's Report on UNMIK and the latest developments in Kosovo. I will also offer my observations on the situation in Kosovo, within a wider context.

As detailed in the report, the past six months included many instances of political posturing over matters which remain a part of the agenda of the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The energy roadmap; people's freedom of movement, the validity of identity documents, and the association/community of Serb majority municipalities – to name just a few. We will continue to extend all possible support toward the success of this dialogue. Equally, I am cognizant that developments in Kosovo, as with all open matters in the region, are affected by the European security environment as a whole.

In this light, I have been in close conversation with many partners and stakeholders on the ground, as well as interlocutors across the region. A shared assessment is that issues which

appear dormant can easily return to the forefront of the Dialogue agenda. This places extra responsibility for ensuring close coordination among the various Missions on the ground. When working together, coherently, and effectively, we can contribute to clarify misunderstandings and avoid escalations. We can also help to empower leaders whose vision recognizes the benefits of reducing tensions, not inflaming them. Leaders who are ready to open the space for progress and positive change.

Mr. President,

Since last spring, we all observed several escalations in political rhetoric between Pristina and Belgrade, as well as a few moments of acute tension on the ground. These threatened to set back many of the gains previously achieved through the EU-facilitated dialogue. During such moments, the attention of both sides was invested in mutual accusation, rather than in making use of formal and informal channels for engaging in constructive dialogue.

Diplomatic interventions, along with a top-level dialogue meeting on 18 August, led to temporary relief, in the form of extended deadlines and promises to continue discussions. Yet, the parties' willingness to risk dangerous confrontations on the ground, at best, set the process back. At worst, it may lead to much more serious consequences, even if unintended.

Mr. President,

At times when the line between political provocation and overt belligerence blurs, we are reminded of the importance and discerning role of our mandated international partner, KFOR, whose presence continuously ensures a safe and secure environment in Kosovo. I wish to express my personal appreciation to departing KFOR Commander Major General Ferenc Kajari of Hungary, under whose leadership KFOR played its role in an exemplary manner. I also wish to acknowledge his newly arrived successor, Major General Angelo Ristuccia, who I have no doubt will continue to foster the essential UNMIK-KFOR partnership.

Mr President,

As I emphasised here last April, the government of Kosovo has had an ambitious agenda whose delivery depends on sound decision making, strong partnerships, and public consensus. We

recognise the continuing effort of the government to strengthen the rule of law and justice, which can only succeed through full compliance with all applicable legal frameworks, and by ensuring due process. In this context, I would highlight the importance of:

- The full implementation of all high court decisions, such as those of the Constitutional Court,
- Full respect for human rights, including social and economic rights, property, and freedom of movement, for all communities.
- Full respect for all obligations previously undertaken and ratified within the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue.

Mr President,

There are many choices to be made by political leaders in the days ahead about how to manage their ambitions and objectives given the contours of wider economic and security uncertainty at this time. Choices between cooperation or division, between threats or gestures of good will, between compromises or zero-sum calculations.

For that, responsibility starts at home. Amidst all the challenges, we have witnessed positive examples of leadership and cooperation. The government of Kosovo remains focused on addressing critical issues in relation to the rule of law; efforts we expect are noted by European member states weighing their positions on the visa and travel regime for the people of Kosovo.

For as long as we, the international community, remain actively engaged in Kosovo, we also bear responsibilities. Among these is to support those choices which offer hope for a better future to families and individuals across the society.

Mr. President,

Regional government-level cooperation initiatives – regardless of their labels, authorship, and participation can also contribute to the resolution of political tensions and problems. This is especially true now, when all parts of the region are affected by similar supply chain risks and other economic challenges.

Of course, regional initiatives are not a panacea either. Sustainable peace requires much more, including the direct engagement of communities and better understanding their views, concerns and interests. This is where the role of missions such as ours can do more to support progress.

Mr. President,

Our Mission continues to adapt its focus, carrying forward some of the best initiatives launched in the past, such as the long-established trust-building agenda, while accurately assessing present realities. We are renewing our resource priorities, refining our institutional partnerships, and enhancing our internal working objectives and culture. My goal is for UNMIK to focus upon those areas where our continued presence, in concert with the entire UN family as well as our other partners in Kosovo, contributes consistently with positive effects.

This includes:

1- Participating in and promoting effective communication across ethnic and political lines at all levels of society. It involves creating opportunities that promote an atmosphere where respect for human rights, for the rule of law, and for the peaceful settlement of differences are more consistently manifested.

2- Redoubling the Mission's commitment to support trust building actors from across all parts of Kosovo society, amplifying the power and energy of those who possess the drive and orientation to shape a promising future for themselves and the generations that follow.

3- Helping to promote broad awareness about the interdependence, the shared problems and interests of people across Kosovo and throughout the region. And it includes doing all of this in a manner well informed by the current regional and global political landscape.

Mr. President,

Our Mission will be refining its work with local partners to advance the trust-building agenda, with a focus on women and youth, but also more broadly on future leaders and change makers from all walks of life. During the past six months, we have used our convening power in so many ways. That includes bringing together more than 150 youth leaders from Kosovo and the region for the fourth UN Youth Assembly, the largest multiethnic youth forum in Kosovo; hosting the Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security to raise the profile of women's

participation in political processes; and supporting 37 CSOs from across Kosovo's communities to launch the third annual human rights report. Critical topics have been constructively – and safely – addressed in these forums: misinformation, hate speech, women in leadership, youth decision making, domestic violence, and more. We have also supported access to justice and language rights, including through initiatives to provide legal aid, translators in court and free language learning tools.

Mr. President,

A few weeks ago, in his opening remarks to the General Assembly, the Secretary General stated, “We live in a world where the logic of cooperation and dialogue is the only path forward”; “We need hope … and more. We need action”. I echoed this message during my meetings with leaders across the region about recent developments in Kosovo. I am now more and more convinced that any agreement between Belgrade and Pristina can only be achieved and implemented with a high degree of public involvement and ownership. Allow me here, to take the opportunity to commend the EU Special Representative for his continuous engagement in this regard.

Based on the mandate given by this Council for the international presences in Kosovo, we look forward to cooperating with the institutions of Kosovo based on good faith and full respect for one another.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to this Council for your sustained engagement and continuous support of our Mission.

Thank you, Mr. President.