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The situation in Kosovo* and the role of the Council of Europe

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 1923 (2010)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the Parliamentary Assembly's continued attention to the situation in Kosovo. The Committee of Ministers confirms its own commitment to the European perspective of all the people living there, who should benefit from the same level of standards for democracy, human rights and the rule of law as all other Europeans.

2. An overview of current Council of Europe action, particularly for those fields referred to in paragraphs 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1923 (2010), can be found in the appendix to this reply.

3. The monitoring mechanisms for the Convention for the Prevention of Torture and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities are currently implemented on the basis of agreements with UNMIK and NATO. The Committee of Ministers believes that the monitoring process will only be truly meaningful if the relevant and competent authorities in Kosovoare directly involved in the monitoring process and responsible for following-up the recommendations. Furthermore, the Committee of Ministers shares the view of the Parliamentary Assembly that the implementation of other Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms is an indispensable component of a Council of Europe contribution to raising standards of democracy, human rights and rule of law in Kosovo· To achieve this goal, the Committee of Ministers has instructed the Secretariat to prepare a feasibility study.

4. In order to implement its co-operation activities effectively, the Council of Europe will align its interaction with the relevant and competent authorities in Kosovo to the practice of other status-neutral international organisations, such as the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union and in full conformity with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/1999.

5. As part of his reform of the Council of Europe external presence, the Secretary General is at present considering ways and means to strengthen the capacities of the Council of Europe Office in Pristina, including in the areas of analysis and project development.

1. adopted at the 1102nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (12 January 2011)

*All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Appendix to the reply

Overview of Co-operation Programmes

Kosovo is a beneficiary to several regional Council of Europe/EU Joint Programmes concerning cultural and archaeological heritage, social security co-ordination and fighting cybercrime. An increase in Council of Europe activities to support the implementation of Council of Europe standards will require significant additional financial resources.

In the area of the rule of law, a Council of Europe/EU Joint Programme is being finalised to work on fighting economic crime. The project should be implemented in 2011 and will aim to strengthen institutional capacities to counter corruption, money laundering and the financing of terrorism in accordance with European standards through thorough assessments and recommendations for improving and streamlining of economic crime reforms. The regional project PROSECO, completed in July 2010, has had an important impact on strengthening judiciary co-operation. Further efforts to support improvement of the rule of law, notably reinforcing the judiciary will be considered.

The important activities for the preservation of cultural heritage are building the capacities to promote cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, as a factor of economic and social development. The education project is contributing to inter-cultural education at all levels. Discussions on future activities for cultural heritage and education are currently underway between the beneficiaries, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Fostering reconciliation and inter-community dialogue are important goals for Council of Europe work as highlighted in paragraph 4.4 of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1923 (2010). The Council of Europe supports the Pristina Institute for Political Studies and its participation in the Network of Schools of Political Studies. In this context several bilateral meetings between the Pristina Institute and the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence have been held, as well as amongst the schools in the South-East Europe.

The Council of Europe has also provided modest financial support for several youth projects specifically aiming at inter-community reconciliation in partnership with the Association of Local Democracy Agencies and *"Sports sans Frontières"*. A multiethnic youth camp was organised from March to June 2010 and brought together the youth of different ethnic background and from different municipalities building the communication and co-operation bridges between them.

The Council of Europe is also working with local civic associations to promote multi-ethnic activities for children and launched in 2009 the Speak Out Against Discrimination Campaign, with the participation of French footballer and education activist Lilian Thuram. Young people from both communities have been taking part in the annual Peace Camp for conflict resolution for the past several years. Further initiatives in this area are being considered and should be a priority over the next few years.

Gender equality, violence against women and trafficking in human beings continue to be a challenge. The Council of Europe has been working closely with EULEX to inform its staff of GRETA standards. Both this sector and the sector of media independence should be better addressed in co-operation activities in order to bring Council of Europe standards more directly to bear upon legislation and practice.

Support for the protection of human rights will be strengthened through a new Council of Europe/European Commission Joint Programme "Enhancing human rights protection in Kosovo", which should start in 2011.

The Council of Europe has been focussing on the situation of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities for many years. The Commissioner for Human Rights and the Advisory Committee of the FCNM have given specific recommendations for improving access to housing, education and employment. The Dosta campaign as well as the Council of Europe/European Commission Joint Programme Intercultural Education and the Bologna Process have devoted resources and attention to training teachers of Romani language and school mediators, amongst other activities.

Under a Council of Europe/European Commission Joint Programme, the Council of Europe has been assisting the Statistical Office with the technical preparation of the population and housing census planned for 2011.