Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1508 (2001)[1]

Situation in Kosovo and the neighbouring regions

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The situation in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been a subject of constant concern for the Parliamentary Assembly.

2. Although the situation in the region has calmed down during recent weeks, the Assembly remains extremely worried about the violent actions that have been carried out by Albanian extremists in Kosovo, southern Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". It strongly condemns these actions, which constituted a serious threat to the stability of the whole region.

3. The Council of Europe, together with other international organisations, must support efforts towards political settlement of the situation in Kosovo and the neighbouring regions, and intensify its activities aimed at the promotion and consolidation of democratic stability, as well as improving inter-ethnic relations.

As regards Kosovo

4. The Assembly reiterates its strong support for full implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) on the situation relating to Kosovo.

5. The Assembly welcomes the process that has resulted in the setting-up of municipalities in Kosovo following the municipal elections held in October 2000. It encourages those municipalities that have not yet completed their composition to do so as soon as possible and it emphasises the need to include all ethnic communities in their political structures.

6. It welcomes the intention of Mr Haekkerup, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, and Head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (Unmik), to hold, later this year, Kosovo-wide legislative elections once the legal framework for provisional self-government in Kosovo is in place and the institutions to be created with these elections have been defined.

7. Every effort must be made to guarantee the full participation of all ethnic communities in Kosovo in the elections. Without their participation, the elections could not serve the purpose they are meant to serve. It calls on all Kosovo people, especially the Kosovo Albanians, to do their utmost to ensure that a high security environment prevails during the election period. It urges all communities, including Serbs, Roma, Ashkalia, Turks and Egyptians, to register and to take part in a constructive manner in these elections.

8. In this respect, the Assembly congratulates the progress made by the working group under the authority of Mr Haekkerup, aimed at developing a legal framework for the provisional institutions of a democratic and autonomous self-government in Kosovo, as foreseen in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), without prejudice to the final political settlement for Kosovo. It notes with satisfaction that the Kosovo Serbs have now rejoined the working group and encourages all those participating in it to continue their involvement until the remaining issues have been solved.

9. It calls upon all political parties in Kosovo to support the efforts made by the Unmik to build a stable multi-ethnic democratic society in Kosovo and to ensure favourable conditions for Kosovo-wide elections.

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1. Assembly debate on 25 April 2001 (12th Sitting) (see Doc. 9020, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mrs Kautto). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 April 2001 (12th Sitting).

10. The Assembly welcomes the close contacts between the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Unmik and Kfor, and in particular, the agreement on the opening of an Unmik Office in Belgrade. It notes with satisfaction the recent talks between Mr Haekkerup and President Kostunica, which form an important step in a constructive relationship between the Unmik and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

11. It stresses the importance of substantial dialogue between Kosovo political leaders and the federal authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

12. It is also pleased to note that a number of Kosovo Albanian political prisoners detained in Serbia have been released, and, noting the commitment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to release political prisoners, the Council of Europe expects the early release of all political prisoners.

13. The Assembly urges local authorities in Kosovo, the Unmik and Kfor to take all possible steps to locate those Serbs, Albanians and members of other ethnic groups who have been abducted or have disappeared since June 1999.

14. It reiterates its call for an immediate end to ethnic violence in Kosovo and urges all political leaders in Kosovo to continue to condemn these acts, as well as the acts committed by Albanian extremists in the neighbouring regions. The political leaders in Kosovo must continue to dissociate themselves unambiguously and unconditionally from these extremists and to foster peace and stability.

15. The Assembly calls on the Kosovo Serb community, as well as other communities, to play an active role in the interim structures and institutions set up by the international community.

16. The Assembly hopes that, in the near future, the Kosovo people will gradually start taking over the various functions and responsibilities that at the time being belong to the international community.

As regards southern Serbia

17. The Assembly remains deeply concerned about the situation in certain municipalities of southern Serbia resulting from the violent actions by ethnic Albanian armed groups.

18. The Assembly urges Kfor to take all possible steps to prevent any support from Kosovo for criminals and extremists operating in the buffer zone and in southern Serbia.

19. It welcomes the cease-fire agreements signed on 12 March 2001 by the ethnic Albanian extremists and the Serbian Government in the Presevo valley.

20. It commends the continued restraint of the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslqavia and Serbia, and takes note of their plan (Covic plan) for the “solution of the crisis created by the activities of the Albanian extremist groups in the south of Serbia”.

21. The Assembly welcomes the beginning of negotiations in the framework of this plan, and encourages parties to find a peaceful and durable solution through dialogue and confidence-building measures.

As regards “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

22. The Assembly calls for vigilance as regards armed formations, which remain in and around the borders of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

23. This situation could have destabilised not only “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, but the entire region.

24. The use of violence by the Albanian extremist groups discredits any cause they may claim.

25. The Assembly supports efforts by the authorities of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” to co-operate with Nato and other international organisations to end this violence in a manner consistent with the rule of law and calls on Nato to increase its assistance to the Macedonian authorities to cope with the situation.

26. It urges Kfor to take all possible steps to prevent support from Kosovo for extremists operating in the frontier region between Kosovo and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, and therefore to strengthen arms and border controls and to arrest the extremists.

27. It stresses the need to respect sovereignty and to maintain the territorial integrity of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and all other states of the region, and calls on all parties to respect the demarcation agreement, signed in Skopje on 23 February 2001 and ratified by the Parliament of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" on 1 March 2001.

28. The Assembly recalls its decision of April 2000 to close the monitoring procedure of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and it notes that the Monitoring Committee has decided to open the post-monitoring dialogue. On this occasion, it had also encouraged the Macedonian majority and the ethnic Albanian minority to continue to strive for the full integration of minorities within one state that is respectful of all citizens' rights and freedoms.

29. The Assembly notes with satisfaction the ongoing discussion on reform of the Constitution of the "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", held with a view to taking into account some of the concerns of the Albanian population.

30. The Assembly urges Albanian political leaders in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" to continue to co-operate with the government of that country in the framework of the democratic process in pursuing their aspirations to consolidate the country's multi-ethnic society.

31. The Assembly welcomes the clear condemnations of violence from the Government of the Republic of Albania, from the Albanian political leaders in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and in Kosovo. All Albanian leaders of the region must continue this policy of condemnation of violence and use their influence in promoting dialogue and peace.

As regards Montenegro

32. The Assembly welcomes the high turnout in the general elections of 22 April 2001 and considers this a clear illustration of the commitment of the people of Montenegro to moving towards pluralist democracy.

33. The Assembly calls on the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the authorities of its constituent Republic of Serbia:

33.1. to fully comply with the provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) on the situation relating to Kosovo;

33.2. to continue to co-operate closely with the Unmik and Kfor, in particular in assuring that the future legislative elections in Kosovo will be carried out in a democratic and peaceful manner;

33.3. to encourage the Kosovo Serbs to bring together the different fragments of their community and to set up their own political structures and to become active in local political life;

33.4. to pursue a substantial dialogue with Kosovo Albanian leaders;

33.5. to release the remaining Kosovo Albanian prisoners detained in Serbia and to take all possible steps to locate those who have disappeared and enable them to return;

33.6. to continue to act with restraint in southern Serbia and to continue negotiations to reach a political settlement to the situation in southern Serbia, founded on democratic principles;

33.7. to undertake confidence-building measures, including political and economic reforms aimed at improving the situation of Albanians in southern Serbia;

33.8. to continue reforms and efforts aimed at strengthening a democratic and multi-ethnic society in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;

33.9. to pursue the dialogue concerning the framework of relations between Serbia and Montenegro, in order to agree on a peaceful solution in the interest of the peoples and the stability of the region.

34. The Assembly calls on the authorities of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia":

34.1. to intensify their efforts to end the violence in a manner consistent with the rule of law and to pursue their policy aimed at resolving the conflict by political and diplomatic means;

34.2. to continue its co-operation with the Albanian parties and undertake necessary internal political, legal and economic reforms to improve ethnic relations, to stabilise the multi-ethnic society and to consolidate a truly multi-ethnic state;

34.3. to continue their co-operation with Nato in addressing security problems, in particular the control of its border with Kosovo.

35. The Assembly urges the authorities of Albania:

35.1. to continue to condemn unconditionally the violence of Albanian extremists, to take all possible measures to prevent support for these extremists and to continue their efforts to promote peace in the region;

35.2. to continue their efforts to fight against organised crimes including trafficking of women and the production and trafficking of drugs.

36. The Assembly resolves to follow closely the situation.

37. Moreover, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to devote the necessary resources for allowing a positive reply to a possible request from the Unmik to contribute in the organisation and observing of the forthcoming legislative elections in Kosovo.