

**SRSB Caroline Ziadeh Statement for UN Security Council  
8 April 2025**

Monsieur le Président, Excellences,

Distingués membres du Conseil de sécurité, mesdames et messieurs, Je tiens à féliciter la France pour sa Présidence du conseil de sécurité pour le mois d'Avril.

1. C'est un honneur pour moi de présenter au Conseil les derniers développements survenus au Kosovo depuis la publication du rapport du Secrétaire général, qui couvre la période du 16 Septembre 2024 au 15 mars de cette année, et de partager avec vous quelques observations clés.

Monsieur le Président,

2. The conduct of the election on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February was notably peaceful, although not without technical complications and appeals by political parties. It was especially encouraging to note the gains in women's representation which resulted in women increasing their presence in the Kosovo Assembly without relying on the 30 per cent gender quota foreseen by the Law on General Elections. I congratulate the people of Kosovo on yet another peaceful and inclusive election.
3. Following the certification of the results on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, I look forward to the timely formation of the next government, recognising that this might require complex negotiations. Once in place, it is imperative that concrete steps will be taken to prioritize the well-being of the people of Kosovo as well as the implementation of commitments made under the EU-facilitated Dialogue, and advance on the process of normalisation of relations.
4. After the appointment of Mr. Peter Sørensen as the new EUSR for the Pristina-Belgrade Dialogue in January, I look forward to working closely with him. His early engagement offers an opportunity to support both sides in making headway. The progress made in December, when Belgrade and Pristina agreed on the terms of reference for the Joint Commission on Missing Persons, should inspire them all to move forward in other areas of the Dialogue.
5. I urge all sides to make full use of this Joint Commission, in tandem with the existing Working Group on Missing Persons, to proceed without further delay and help families obtain clarity on the fate of their loved ones.
6. In this context, I wish to commemorate the passing of Mr. Bajram Qerkinaj, father of a missing son who dedicated decades of his life to advocate for the right to know, whose efforts spanned communities and ethnicities and embodied the shared humanity of all affected. His legacy continues to guide this work, and UNMIK remains committed to supporting the Missing Persons Resource Centre and all families still seeking answers.

Mr. President,

7. When I visited northern Kosovo on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, civil society interlocutors, political and community leaders alike pointed to a continued trust deficit particularly vis-à-vis the

institutions, while also sharing concerns about what lies ahead given the current political context and developments in the region and beyond. They lamented the unilateral actions taken by the Pristina authorities, including the recent closures of Serbia-run Centres of Social Welfare and the adverse socio-economic impact this has had. Nevertheless, they saw no alternative to the EU-facilitated Dialogue and the need for Kosovo Serbs to reclaim a sense of agency through a self-management system within the Association/Community of Serb Majority Municipalities. They appealed to the international community to support all efforts for a renewed engagement in good faith with the normalization process. Interlocutors again raised concerns over previous allegations of sexual harassment of Kosovo Serb women in public. All such allegations need to be investigated.

8. Time and again, I have expressed my concerns regarding the closures of Serbia-run institutions, and the consequences they are having on economic and social rights, especially for persons in vulnerable situations. UNMIK will continue to closely monitor their impacts. I also reiterate my call to refrain from unilateral actions and urge outstanding issues to be discussed constructively and in good faith within the EU-facilitated Dialogue.

Mr. President,

9. The recent decision of the Kosovo government to enable residents with documents from Serbia-run institutions in Kosovo to register civil status documents with relevant authorities is welcomed. This is one important component in remedying civil status challenges faced by non-majority communities, and Kosovo Serb residents in particular. However, key gaps remain, related to the scope, interpretation and implementation of the decision. I encourage enhancing outreach efforts towards the communities concerned and join others in supporting the extension of the current 30<sup>th</sup> of April deadline.

Mr. President,

10. I condemn the attack on the Ibar-Lepenac/Ibër-Lepenc water canal on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November and reiterate my call for a comprehensive and transparent investigation to identify and hold accountable those responsible. I urge all leaders to act responsibly, avoid escalation, and to cooperate in bringing the perpetrators to justice.
11. More than one year since the serious security incident in Banjska/Banjskë, I reiterate the importance of ensuring accountability through fair and independent judicial proceedings.
12. This case, along with the Ibar-Lepenac/Ibër-Lepenc attack, highlight the need for effective engagement with mutual legal assistance mechanisms to support ongoing investigations and prosecutions.
13. Furthermore, I want to express my concern over the explosive device that was thrown into a newly opened Kosovo post office in Zvečan/Zveçan on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, which caused material damage. Again, such acts of violence are unacceptable and should be fully and promptly investigated and perpetrators brought to justice.

Mr. President,

14. I underscore the central role of the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo in ensuring independent investigations into allegations of excessive use of force and ill-treatment by police in northern Kosovo, including of minors. I urge that findings be made public to promote transparency and institutional trust. While the Inspectorate has opened a number of cases,

follow-up and disciplinary action are essential to deter recurrences. In line with international human rights standards, I also encourage authorities to act on the recommendations of UN Special Procedures, including greater use of alternatives to pre-trial detention.

Mr. President,

15. I am deeply concerned by developments involving the destruction of religious symbols, most recently against the Serbian Orthodox Church, which are incompatible with the right to freedom of religion and pose a risk of heightening religious and interethnic tensions. I call on all to respect religious sites and promote tolerance.
16. I also note the arrest of 16 individuals in Gjakovë/Đakovica and Prizren on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of April, while there were on religious visit to Pejë/Peć. While most of the pilgrims were released, four are still in remand for 30 days.
17. In the interest of safeguarding community rights, full implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages remains essential. I note the recent expiration of the Language Commissioner's mandate on 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2025 and reiterate the Secretary-General's call upon the Kosovo authorities to take measures quickly to appoint a Language Commissioner to ensure the protection and promotion of language rights and safeguard the rights of non-majority communities.

Mr. President,

18. Trust-building remains fundamental to fostering a stable and prosperous future for all communities in Kosovo. Despite the continued challenges which reflect a sense of lack of confidence in institutions and concerns over intercommunal relations, UNMIK stands steadfast in its commitment to bridging divides. At the core of our trust-building efforts are initiatives that uphold the rule of law, safeguard human rights, and actively promote the inclusion of women and youth in peace processes. In this setting, our mission is dedicated to fostering efforts on the ground that strive to build trust across communities, specifically by using our programmatic activities to focus on promoting inter-ethnic dialogue and countering divisive narratives to address the trust deficit.
19. The UNMIK-supported Barabar Centre, hosted well over one hundred events, and thousands of participants, demonstrating its role as a hub for inter-ethnic dialogue and a safe space for communities to engage in meaningful conversations towards building a more resilient and inclusive society.
20. Last September, as part of UNMIK's commitment to promoting women's inclusion in decision-making and integration of gender perspectives into reconciliation, I had the honour and a privilege of participating in a high-level roundtable in Tirana. This was an event that brought together high-level representatives to advance gender mainstreaming in the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.
21. UNMIK will continue to work with local partners to strengthen access to justice, support legal aid for all communities and digitalize court archives. Furthermore, and in collaboration with civil society, UNMIK continues to promote property rights through targeted outreach.

22. Working with youth remains at the centre of the Mission's Trust Building projects to foster cultural understanding and long-lasting relationships to further resilient peace, particularly as there is less and less contact between different communities among young people than in earlier generations. In this regard, a project that includes joint visits to each other's cultural and religious heritage sites involving a growing number of young participants from Kosovo Albanian, Serb, Bosniak, Roma, Ashkali and Turkish communities is helping to overcome mistrust among youth. In parallel, an innovative STEM education project is opening new horizons for girls in rural schools in diverse communities, using mobile labs and dynamic science clubs to bridge gaps, spark curiosity, and empower the next generation of scientists and leaders.

Mr. President,

23. I wish to express my appreciation for the close cooperation and support we receive daily from our major multilateral partners – in particular KFOR – and the strength of our coordination with the UN Kosovo Team. Together, and with your continuing support, we will maintain our focus on the rights and well-being of people in Kosovo.

24. I appeal to all of you in this august Council to remain resolute in your support for peace, stability, and principled cooperation in Kosovo. Through collective commitment, we can help reinforce credible political dialogue, safeguard fundamental rights, and lay firmer foundations for security and increased prosperity.

Mr. President,

25. I conclude by extending my deep appreciation to you, distinguished members of the Council, for your sustained engagement with UNMIK's mission. Your continued attention remains essential to our shared efforts.

And I thank you Mr. President.