

## BALKANS TOP LINES: KOSOVO

- **The biggest challenge in 2006 will be the successful conclusion of the Kosovo status process.** We support President Ahtisaari in his role as Status Envoy, and look forward to the talks being concluded in 2006 if at all possible. We look to Belgrade and Pristina to find a negotiated solution on the basis of the Contact Group's Guiding Principles which have been endorsed by the UNSC, and shared by the EU and have been placed in the Library of the House.
- Not for UK to dictate Status outcome. Independence for Kosovo is clearly one option – some one way that it is the only option that will bring long-term security and stability to the region. That is what an overwhelming majority of the people in Kosovo (90%) want. But those who advocate independence must show how they will guarantee not just the rights of minorities but how those rights will be implemented and protected.
- We want to see a Kosovo settlement that promotes regional stability and multi-ethnicity. We also want it to enhance the prospects for Euro-Atlantic integration of both Serbia and Kosovo. That very much depends however on the efforts of both governments, particularly in Serbia's case on their willingness to overcome the legacy of the past, notably on ICTY co-operation.
- A settlement must promote economic progress and a rise in living standards for local people. Illegitimate parallel structures will need to be disbanded but we would support transparent cultural links between Serb communities, including those in SaM. There are a number of European precedents which might usefully inform discussions in the status process such as arrangements in South Tyrol and the Good Friday Agreement. Belgrade could not have however a veto over Kosovo decisions. Special arrangements will be needed to protect and preserve patrimonial sites and UNESCO have a possible role here.
- Whatever the status outcome, our aim is that the Kosovo government should run much more of Kosovo affairs. But it is clear that the international community need to remain to help implement a settlement. We will be looking to NATO to continue to provide and lead on international military presence. A civilian presence with some form of process of intervention will also be key. We expect the EU to play a very strong, though not exclusive, role in this.