

clearly essential to creating the conditions for minorities to remain in Kosovo, and IDPs to return.

To the Kosovo Serb leaders he said, in a private meeting on 6 February, that the final status settlement should respect the values that Europe basis itself upon. He added that the Contact Group statement clearly said that any settlement needed to be acceptable to the people of Kosovo. Given this, coupled with the legacy issues, John Sawers told the Kosovo Serb leaders that the UK believed independence was the most likely outcome of the status process. We also stressed the importance of both Belgrade and Kosovo Serbs playing a full part in the negotiations.

Following this private meeting, however, one of the Kosovo Serbs present, Goran Bogdanovic, chose to make the private meeting public, and misinterpreted the national messages given as coming from the Contact Group. This was unexpected. We had delivered private messages, and intended them to remain so.

In Belgrade, we delivered the same messages to Prime Minister Kostunica that we had given in Pristina, including our view that independence was the most likely option, some would say the only option.

As a direct result Bogdanovic's decision to make a public statement in which he misinterpreted what was said at our private meetings, we saw the need to clarify the UK position in the media. John Sawers therefore gave interviews to BETA, Reuters and B92, which I'm sure you have all seen. We also issued a press statement following our meeting with Kostunica. I have copies here to distribute.

I would like to emphasise that we have acted 100% within the framework of what was agreed at the 31 January Contact Group Ministerial meeting. We understand the USA has done the same, through Frank Wisner's visit last week and would expect other Contact Group members to do likewise in the course of the next few days.

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