

The substance of the discussions were fully consistent with the Contact Group statement of 31 January and the Guiding Principles endorsed by the Security Council.

Next Steps in the Status Process

The United Nations Security Council met on 14 February to discuss the latest UN report on the implementation of standards in Kosovo. Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi of Kosovo attended as part of the UN delegation. President Tadic of Serbia & Montenegro also participated.

Following on from this will be a resumption of the status process with a meeting in Vienna on 20 February on the issue of de-centralisation. This meeting was originally scheduled for 25 January but postponed following the death of President Ibrahim Rugova on 21 January. The talks will be led by UN Deputy Status Envoy, Albert Rohan (Austria).

We understand that the Kosovar Albanians have prepared a position paper on de-centralisation aimed at addressing Serb concerns, particularly on:

- links between majority Serb municipalities in northern Kosovo and other smaller Serb municipalities elsewhere in Kosovo.
- links between Serb municipalities and Belgrade.
- Local decision-making competences in areas such as policing (akin to the arrangements set out in the Ohrid Framework Agreement in Macedonia).

We hope that this constructive approach shown by the Kosovar Albanian Negotiating Team will be extended during the status discussions into other areas such as protection of religious and cultural heritage.

EU Presidency/Contact Group contacts

The EU Council Secretariat and Commission members participate in Contact Group. For the Council Secretariat in accordance with long-standing practice to brief EU25 on Contact Group developments e.g. through Coreu reporting. See no reason to change this.

EU Presidency not a formal member of Group but participates from time to time upon invitation. **If pressed/privately:** shouldn't push this: some in the Contact Group resent the Presidency's participation.