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**KOSOVO SERBS AFTER THE
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE:
THE RIGHT MOMENTUM FOR
CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCC – COMMUNITIES CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL
DPKO – DEPARTMENT FOR PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS
DSS – DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF SERBIA
FYROM- FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
EULEX – EUROPEAN UNION RULE OF LAW MISSION IN KOSOVO
ICO – INTERNATIONAL CIVILIAN OFFICE
IDP – INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE
ISG – INTERNATIONAL STEERING GROUP
KFOR – KOSOVO FORCE
KPS – KOSOVO POLICE SERVICE
MIA – MINISTRY OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
MLSW – MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL WELFARE
MRC – MINISTRY FOR RETURNS AND COMMUNITIES
MTT – MINISTRY FOR TRANSPORT AND TELECOMMUNICATION
MUP – MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
OCA – OFFICE FOR COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
SLS - INDEPENDENT LIBERAL PARTY
SPC – SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
SRS – SERBIAN RADICAL PARTY
SRSG – SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF SECRETARY GENERAL
UNDP – UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
UNMIK – UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN KOSOVO

I. Introduction

Following Kosovo's declaration of independence on February 17 2008, the new country faces a number of challenges. One of the thorniest issues is treatment of the Kosovo Serb community. The independence of Kosovo has directly affected the Albanians and Serbs and their fragile relations. Impressively and against dire forecasts, not a single major inter-ethnic incident has been recorded since. Contrary to expectations, the independence has diffused the Albanian nationalism, thereby creating momentum for full acceptance of Kosovo Serbs as an integral part of society. Meanwhile, Kosovo Serbs aspire to have a dignified and predictable life in Kosovo, but live in fear from Kosovo's statehood and Belgrade's policies. Furthermore, the Serbs are undergoing a silent intra-communal debate on what to do next. Most importantly, they are determined to stay and build their lives in Kosovo.

Kosovo's government has pledged to respect and implement the highest standards for minority communities' protection enshrined in the new Constitution. The nature of the state, as pledged in the Constitution, is inclusive for all communities and has a symbolic neutral to any community living in Kosovo, which is contrary to the prevailing regional nation-state philosophy. The Albanian majority has at large embraced such neutrality and civic foundations of the new state. Such a milieu has opened opportunities for a major change in Albanian-Serb relations. On the other hand, without the cooperation of Kosovo Serbs, the provisions of the Comprehensive Proposal for Kosovo's Status Settlement might not be fully implemented. This in turn would negatively impact the life of Kosovo Serbs and inter-ethnic relations.

The Kosovo Serb community, especially in the settlements south of the Ibër/Ibar river where the vast majority of Serbs live, remains vulnerable, lives in fear and is coerced to submit to the will of Serbia's government. A number of Kosovo Serb political leaders south of Mitrovica object to the policies of the government of Serbia, expressing fear that policies of Belgrade result in the Kosovo Serb population leaving Kosovo and resettling in Serbia. Those leaders also express their suspicion that the end-goal of the government of Serbia is a partition of Kosovo along the Ibër/Ibar river, which equals with sacrificing Kosovo Serb population elsewhere. This fear has increased with the creation of the "Assembly of Municipalities of Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija" by former Serbian prime minister Vojislav Koštunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and Serbian Radical Party (SRS) in Mitrovica, derived from the illegal municipal elections of 11 May 2008. The fear in question can only be boosted following the explicit support of this move from Russia. Most Kosovo Serb political leaders in Kosovo have, in one way or another rejected the creation of this Assembly. Despite the fact that Kosovo Serbs are not expected to embrace in the short run the independence of Kosovo, the overall environment is permissive for relaxation of interethnic relations. The Kosovo Serbs need to enjoy the rights and benefits offered by Ahtisaari's proposal. The implementation of this plan should not be conditioned. Kosovo Serb acceptance of the independence of Kosovo might occur in the years to come, whereas until that occurs, a *modus vivendi* must be developed.

This is the first in a series of policy briefs will be prepared by KIPRED in the next two years. Through this policy brief, KIPRED seeks to explore the room for confidence building and feasible policy measures which may be implemented by Kosovo authorities. Such exploration is compelled by the need to positively and sincerely use the current momentum towards decreasing the fear of Kosovo Serbs from what independence of Kosovo brings to them. By the same token, the use of the current moment is compelled by the need to avoid frustration of the majority community with Government's handling of relations with Kosovo Serbs, and prevent the possibility of Kosovo's partition becoming the most doable policy alternative.

II. Current political environment within the Kosovo Serb Community

Following the declaration of independence, three distinct groups emerged among Kosovo Serbs. The first includes political leaders boycotting Kosovo institutions, but at the same time opposing Serbia's policies. The second group revolves around Kosovo Serb political parties participating in Kosovo institutions. The third group includes political and other leaders directly controlled by the Government of Serbia. These divisions have generally manifested south and north of the Ibër/Ibar river.

The first Kosovo Serb leader which began publicly voicing criticism against Belgrade's government policies towards Kosovo Serbs is Rada Trajković. Based in Graçanicë/Gračanica, she has been fighting for years to preserve the Serb community in the settlements south of Mitrovica. With the burning of border posts in northern Kosovo on 19 February 2008 and demonstrations at the borders by Serb army reservists and students in Mitrovica in the first weeks after the declaration of independence, she accelerated the criticism of Koštunica and his minister for Kosovo Slobodan Samardžić. Through this action, she has distanced herself from Belgrade by giving a different voice to Kosovo Serbs, in an attempt to articulate and protect interests of Serbs in enclaves.

This dissent was coupled by a similar voice coming from the north of Mitrovica of another Kosovo Serb political leader, Oliver Ivanović. He has been trying to develop alternative policies to DSS Kosovo strongmen in northern Mitrovica, namely Marko Jakšić and Milan Ivanović¹, were further strengthened in May 2008². In spite of efforts like those of Ivanović the north of Kosovo largely remains a hostage of a few dozen strongmen, aggressively backed by Belgrade's governmental structures. Consequently, the situation has practically silenced the leaders of other northern municipalities who had previously demonstrated limited openness to cooperate with the authorities in Prishtina.

Following the declaration of independence, Kosovo Serbs, with the support and pressure of the Serbian Government, staged an almost complete boycott of Kosovo institutions, such as the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), judicial system, municipal administration, Kosovo Customs, the Kosovo Correctional Service, and Kosovo Railways. Intimidated by former Prime Minister Koštunica's ministers and the Serbian secret service personnel, Kosovo Serbs

¹ A number of international officials in Pristina confirmed to KIPRED that a significant portion of DSS finances comes from groups controlled by Marko Jakšić.

² The leaders in question have cemented their position through Serbia's municipal elections held in Kosovo on 11 May 2008.

south of Ibër/Ibar found themselves pitched against blind loyalty towards the Government of Serbia because of financial dependence and their limited prospects for a dignified and prosperous life in Kosovo.

The northern part of Kosovo has been virtually ungoverned since 17 March 2008 riots, when UNMIK Police and KFOR attempted to return control to the district court in Mitrovica, seized by Serb judges and prosecutors with the help of the operatives of Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) of Serbia. The destruction of border and customs posts of the Kosovo's side of the border with Serbia has created fertile ground for massive smuggling, lawlessness and flourishing of organized crime. Ironically, the Serb extremists did not destroy customs and border posts on Serbia's side of the border, effectively recognizing the boundary line between Kosovo and Serbia. The irony continues with the failure of the international presence in Kosovo to re-establish the border regime in these border crossings with Serbia, thus contributing to the lawlessness in the north.

Boycott has not been uniform across Kosovo. While Kosovo Serb civil servants have withdrawn from their workplaces in the municipalities, where they make up either a majority or a significant proportion of the population³, they continue to participate in municipalities where they remain a minority⁴. Kosovo Serbs also continue to work in the KPS in northern Kosovo, where UNMIK police exercise direct operational command of policing functions. However, they have severed contacts with the KPS central command and have signed contracts with Serbia's Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP). They partially boycott the KPS in central and eastern Kosovo, while fully participating in the police structures in the south (Shtërpce/Štrpce). A number of Kosovo Serb civil servants have silently returned to their workplaces, including some KPS officers. The Kosovo Minister of Internal Affairs (MIA) Zenun Pajaziti, showed excellent political tact and good will when he decided to prolong the paid suspension of Serb members of KPS at the end of May 2008, thus leaving the door open for their eventual return and keeping the multi-ethnic character of Kosovo Police Service.

At the central level, leaders of Kosovo Serb ministers from the Independent Liberal Party (SLS), Ministers of Labor and Social Welfare and Communities and Returns are actively engaged in their work as part of the Government. The same is true for their fellow MP's with the Assembly. The SLS ministers have been instrumental in protecting and realizing the rights of the Serb community. Despite the many challenges they face, their determination and commitment, coupled with concrete results achieved thus far has, increased Serb trust in SLS.

SLS leaders have been instrumental in articulating and implementing demands of Serb inhabitants in central Kosovo vis-à-vis the government of Kosovo, such as finding concrete solutions with the Minister of Transport and Telecommunication (MTI) Fatmir Limaj, planning construction of roads passing through Serb villages (e.g. Çagllavice/Çaglavica and Llapnasellë/Laplje Selo). The Ministry for Returns and Communities (MRC) has obtained control over its budget from UNDP, and is ready to proceed with implementing three major

³ Shtërpce/Štrpce, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Novobërdë/Novo Brdo and Gjilan/Gnjilane.

⁴ Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Lipjan/Lipljan and other areas.

returns project in 2008⁵. Minister of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW) Nenad Rašić overcame initial difficulties when obtaining the post, and has begun working on projects for the benefit of all Kosovars.

Local elections organized by the Republic of Serbia in Kosovo on 11 May 2008, which have been declared illegal by UNMIK, International Steering Group (ISG), International Civilian Office (ICO) and Kosovo Government, have further complicated the situation of the Kosovo Serb community. Turning a blind eye towards these elections in the territory, Kosovo has backstabbed the moderate Kosovo Serb political leaders. Elections were won by the Serb Radical Party (SRS) and Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS). However, only 46% of Kosovo Serbs, including IDPs in Serbia, cast their ballots. Voter turn-out for local elections was higher in northern Kosovo than in enclaves⁶. This shows the hopelessness and disillusionment of Kosovo Serbs south of the Ibër/Ibar river with policies of Belgrade, and also opens a window of opportunity for moderate Kosovo Serb political leaders and the Kosovo Government for positive engagement and cooperation.

Regardless of the aforementioned opportunity, further complications were introduced when the United Nations, namely the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)⁷, prevented the former SRSG Joachim Ruecker to extend the mandate of municipal mayors and assemblies in five municipalities of Kosovo (the extension of mandates for mayors and municipal assemblies in Leposaviq/Leposavić, Zvečan/Zvečan, Zubin Potok, Shtërpcë/Štrpce and the extension of the municipal assembly in Novobërdë/Novo Brdo, whose mayor, a Kosovo Albanian, was elected on 17 November 2007 elections)⁸. On the other hand, elections of 11 May were declared illegal by UNMIK⁹. In essence apart from declaratory statements of all international and domestic institutions, there have not been any concrete actions to prevent establishment of parallel structures to take shape and usurpation of municipal institutions. So far, the only entity acting consistently in implementation of its policies is the Republic of Serbia, thus making its relative success entirely understandable. This confusion creates a legal and governmental limbo, with elements of overthrow in five municipalities of Kosovo, where the “elected” officials of 11 May have slowly begun establishing their political power. This is likely to encourage a segment of the Kosovo Serb community, especially in the northern municipalities, to believe that life and development

⁵ The government of Kosovo gave the budget for returns to UNDP supervision in 2004. This has created tensions when the ministry was created at the end of the same year, since the Serb ministers kept feeling powerless in their work without a budget.

⁶ For details please see Rezultati izbora za odbornike skupština opština na teritoriji Autonomne Pokrajine Kosovo i Metohija (The results of elections for delegates of municipalities in the territory of autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija), Republican Election Commission of Serbia http://www.rik.parlament.sr.gov.yu/cirilica/propisi_frames.htm

⁷ A po i pranon kreu i OKB-se zgjedhjet lokale serbe te organizuara ne Kosove me 11 Maj? (Is the head of UN recognizing the Serbian local elections in Kosovo organized on 11 May?) “Zeri”, p.3, 19 June 2008

⁸ In December 2007, after the K-Serb boycott of Kosovo general, municipal and mayoral elections of 17 November 2007, the SRSG Joachim Rucker used his executive authority under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 to temporarily extend by six months the mandate of the 2002-elected Kosovo Serb municipal officials in four out of five municipalities where Kosovo Serbs constitute a majority, until 11 May 2008. In Novo Brdo, Rucker allowed the Kosovo Albanian–elected mayor to take office, while the majority of the members of the municipal assembly would be Kosovo Serb delegates.

⁹ See SRSG press release “Statement regarding Serbian “local elections” held today in Kosovo”, 11 May 2008, UNMIK/PR/1732

through parallel structures is possible and feasible. KIPRED witnessed repeatedly the different attitudes north and south of Mitrovica. However, due to the inaction of international and domestic institutions in Kosovo and actions of Serbia, a point of deep crisis with a high potential for a conflict has been coupled with the municipality of Shtërpce/Štrpce, creates two neuralgic points of conflict, one in the north (Mitrovicë/Mitrovica) and another one in the south (Shtërpce/Štrpce). This is a challenge that Kosovo has not faced so far.

The Serb community and political representatives, including a number of “elected” on 11 May, are aware that organizing parallel institutions will not succeed in the south¹⁰. Thus, creation of the “Assembly of Municipalities of Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija” on 28 June 2008, is expected to have a major impact in the northern part of Kosovo. This assembly, which is constituted mainly by members of SRS and DSS, is expected to serve two objectives: strengthen the functional division of Kosovo Serbs in line with Kostunica’s strategy and serve as a political tool for preventing any possible change of policy in Belgrade towards Kosovo by Tadić’s government. This political move can especially become relevant if the partition of Kosovo becomes a feasible international policy option, already encouraged by Russia and a number of EU states¹¹.

The divisions in the Serb political spectrum have also touched upon the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC). Immediately after 17th of February, the SPC bishop Artemije prohibited members of the Church to communicate in any form with Kosovo authorities and members of countries that recognized Kosovo’s independence. On 4 March 2008 the Holy Synod of the SPC held a regular meeting in the Patriarchy of Peja/Peć and visited the reconstructed sites of damaged religious facilities during the March 2004 riots. The presiding member of Synod Archbishop Amfilohije expressed Synod’s appreciation for the reconstruction efforts of damaged churches and monasteries, and urged the members of the SPC to continue and maintain communications with the government of Kosovo and all international representatives “without whom the survival of our people and our holy sites would not be possible”¹². This sparked public debate between the bishop and archbishop, which also mirrors to a certain extent the internal debates within the Serb community in Kosovo.

Kosovo Serbs in central and southern Kosovo feel marginalized, forgotten and left behind. They feel they are the prisoners of the politicians from the north, that they are viewed through the lenses of the north, despite the fact that the majority of Kosovo Serbs live south of Mitrovica. This has internalized insecurity in their daily lives, making them live with “packed luggage” as a consequence of the permanent threat of partition. In essence, the Serbs south of Mitrovica are among the most vehement opponents of partition plans. This **opposition** has been cemented during the last nine years by the attention the north of Kosovo has enjoyed in terms of donor policies and political priorities by international community, Kosovo authorities and Government of Serbia. Unlike the Serbs in the north who live in a mono-ethnic environment, the rest of the Serbs are willing to cooperate with Prishtinë/Prishtina, pending concrete and tangible measures of good will offered by the

¹⁰ KIPRED interviews with community leaders, 24 June 2008

¹¹ KIPRED interviews with EU diplomats in Pristina, June 2008

¹² Amfilohije: Održati komunikaciju (Amfilohije: Maintaining the communication) 4 March 2008, http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=03&dd=04&nav_category=640&nav_id=287692

Kosovo Government and international community¹³. These measures should not be politically conditioned. The formula that Serbs are in the process of adopting is the one of “no (formal) recognition of independence but full respect of the laws of Kosovo”, and they see the implementation of decentralization as a vital element which will ensure their future in Kosovo¹⁴. The Kosovo leadership should show openness and understanding to this political evolution.

III. The attitudes of Kosovo Albanian political leadership

The declaration on independence states that Kosovo fully accepts the obligations of the Comprehensive Proposal for a Kosovo Status Settlement. This plan envisages the highest norms for protection of communities, mainly Kosovo Serbs, through decentralization, creation of new municipalities where Serbs would constitute majority, local policing and judiciary, healthcare, education, local economy, financial and human assistance from Serbia and other provisions. The provisions of the plan have become an integral part of Kosovo’s legal framework and Kosovo’s institutions.

Despite Serbia’s continuous provocations aimed at igniting inter-ethnic violence in Kosovo the entire political class of Kosovo has shown impressive maturity and a deep motivation for peaceful conflict management. Kosovo’s authorities, especially Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi, have shown strong leadership with positive messages in diffusing animosities towards the Serb community before, during and immediately after the declaration of independence. Furthermore, Kosovo’s leadership, despite serious problems within the ruling political parties and opposition, has shown an unprecedented commitment to embracing and advocating for the ethnically-neutral, but inclusive nature of Kosovo’s statehood and state symbols, as illustrated with the adopted flag, anthem, Constitution and 41 laws deriving from Ahtisaari’s package.

However, in recent months, the Prime Minister has not kept the intensity of the leadership he demonstrated earlier, leading to an impression that he may not be fully committed towards inclusion of the Serbs within the rest of Kosovo’s society. Moreover, his personal leadership in this aspect has not succeeded to fully spread within the Government, hence limited to personal leadership rather than governmental policy. For example, occasionally the Government still fails to prepare official materials in both official languages. The new state institutions, such as police, judiciary and healthcare still fail in respecting the two language policy in official communication; something they are obliged to do so by the Constitution and the Law on the Use of Languages¹⁵.

President Fatmir Sejdiu, on the other hand, has been largely indifferent in showing leadership and adjusting the vocabulary as the President of all people of Kosovo¹⁶. Moreover, in spite of a few meetings with community representatives, he has not succeeded

¹³ This attitude was confirmed to KIPRED by virtually all Kosovo Serb political and community leaders in central and southern part of Kosovo, throughout April, May and June 2008.

¹⁴ KIPRED interviews on 20 April, 28 May, 24 June 2008

¹⁵ KIPRED has been presented with compelling documentation delivered by Kosovo authorities substantiating failures to observe legal requirements on the use of languages. May/June 2008.

¹⁶ Kosovo Serb leaders, including members of the Government, have complained that the President is not using positive language vis-à-vis the Serb community, KIPRED interviews May/June 2008.

in creating the Communities Consultative Council (CCC), which is explicitly envisaged in the Constitution of Kosovo.

The only strategy that Kosovo's institutions have for inclusion of Kosovo Serbs is the implementation of decentralization, as envisioned in Ahtisaari's proposal. The successful implementation of decentralization and accommodation of Kosovo Serbs cannot happen without employing confidence building measures. Moreover, it is of fundamental importance in understanding that the multiethnic character of Kosovo can only be preserved and fostered by encouraging and showing commitment to inclusion of Kosovo Serbs south of the Ibër/Ibar river where, in essence multi-ethnicity is a fact. The accomplishment of an inclusive multi-ethnicity south of Ibër/Ibar will be the only successful vehicle for the integration of the north and guarantees the avoidance of the partition of Kosovo, an outcome which is not supported at large by Kosovo political leadership and Serbs south of the Ibër/Ibar.

IV. Policy and strategic recommendations

Time is running out fast and Kosovo has no luxury to passively follow evolving international developments towards the region and Kosovo. Kosovo's authorities must take into consideration that the realities on the ground can evolve to different political realities, namely in undermining Ahtisaari's package, creation of a "frozen conflict" or entering a new phase of rearrangement with the north. The undermining of Ahtisaari's package means the destruction of functionality of Kosovo's statehood.

In light of the above, KIPRED proposes the following policy and strategic recommendations, to start implementation no later than September 2008:

Kosovo's authorities - should make continuously clear with political statements and deeds that Kosovo Serbs are an integral part of the society, that Kosovo belongs to all of its citizens and that they have a future in Kosovo. Furthermore, Kosovo authorities should not interfere in intra-Kosovo Serb debates. In fact, they should restrain maximally from using media publicity for any confidence building measures until a significant changes occur on the ground. Authorities in Prishtina should also demonstrate full observance of the two-language policy in official communication, within the Government when communicating with Kosovo Serb ministers and with the citizens of the Serb community.

The President of Kosovo – should firmly and continuously represent the unity of all the people and communities of Kosovo, and readjust his rhetoric and actions accordingly. In addition, the President should urgently establish the Communities' Consultative Council (CCC), and give it substantial meaning to this body to build the multi-ethnic Kosovo.

The Prime Minister of Kosovo- should reinforce the leadership, as during independence, and expand it from personal to governmental leadership. Immediately, he should establish the Office for Community Affairs (OCA) within the Office of Prime Minister in consultation and coordination with Ministry for Returns and Communities and SLS leadership, in order to ensure the full ownership of the Serb community to improve their life in Kosovo.

The Assembly of Kosovo – should strongly consider re-advertising and changing the selection criteria for the Ombudsperson and his deputy. The Assembly should take into account the good practices from FYROM, where the Ombudsperson is always a member of the Albanian minority community, with his deputy coming from the Macedonian majority community. This act may have significant meaning to increase the trust of Kosovo Serbs for the institutions and judiciary of Kosovo.

Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kosovo Police Service (KPS) – should take extra precautions to ensure the security of Serb settlements south of Ibër/Ibar river, and find a solution to Serb members of KPS by either working towards the return of suspended members or by beginning to recruit new Serb police officers by October 2008.

Independent Liberal Party (SLS) leadership (as a governmental coalition partner) - should facilitate and lead in cooperation with other moderate Kosovo Serb leaders, the debate on decentralization within the Serb community

Government of Kosovo- should develop a **strategic rapprochement** for empowering the Kosovo Serbs in central and southern Kosovo as a policy orientation for long-term inclusiveness of the Serb community in Kosovo. Therefore, create an intra-governmental body under the leadership of Prime Minister composed of members from the Ministry of Communities and Returns, Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Economy and Finance .The Kosovo Government should allocate a sufficient inter-ministerial budget in order to plan and implement unconditionally the following actions:

- Improve and build public infrastructure (roads, schools, healthcare facilities, youth and cultural facilities, water, sewage etc), in cooperation with Serb community leaders in central and southern part of Kosovo; ensure that this work is demand driven. In multi-ethnic settlements, use parity projects, beneficial for all communities;
- Rigorously respect the legally binding fair share financing at local levels
- Begin implementing these projects simultaneously throughout Serb settlements south of Ibër/Ibar;
- Building a second-level healthcare facility in central Kosovo, with a prior agreement with local Serb community about the management of this facility which would operate under the legal framework of Kosovo.
- Constructing outposts of the Public University of Mitrovica in central Kosovo
- Begin constructing the facilities for new municipalities, as envisaged with Ahtisaari's decentralization parts. This way, the seriousness of Kosovo government for implementing decentralization will be shown
- The Ministry of Agriculture should develop a strategy for agricultural development and food processing, especially with special focus on multi-ethnic settlements
- Reconstruct and maintain rigorously the destroyed cemeteries of Kosovo Serbs
- Continue with the successful reconstruction of Serb Orthodox churches and monasteries

- Show maximal sensitivity in humanitarian issues, such as supplying medicines and medical transport
- (Apart from religious temples), delegate construction work to local (Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb) community development organizations, which will increase local ownership and improve existing perceptions
- SLS should work closely with the Serb community in order to prevent political abuse of the investments in public infrastructure, i.e. ensure that public facilities will not be taken over by the parallel structures

The donor community - in compliance with this strategy should support the Government of Kosovo in implementing the strategy to empower Kosovo Serbs south of Ibër/Ibar, continue engagement in the north and undertake the following actions:

- Develop and support targeted community development projects to ensure sustainable economic development
- Strengthen socio-economic aspects in Serb settlements south of Ibër/Ibar, and encourage and facilitate private investment, among others, through micro-credits
- Support the construction of urban neighborhood between Llapnasellë/Laplje Selo and Graçanicë/Gračanica
- Do not proceed with plans to build the International University in Mitrovica. Instead, consider creating a European University facility located in central Kosovo, with free access for all communities of Kosovo
- US and UK Embassies should begin organizing courses of English language for the Kosovo Serb youth throughout Kosovo
- EU should introduce a similar programme as a “young-cell fast tracking training scheme”¹⁷ which would target communities, and in particular the Serb community
- Allocate necessary funds for enrollment of at least 20 Kosovo Serbs per year at the American University in Kosovo.

International presence in Kosovo should create conditions and ensure full implementation of the provisions of the Comprehensive Status Proposal, in the entire territory of Kosovo, and immediately undertake the following actions:

- Appoint international municipal administrators in Serb municipalities as soon as possible to avoid legal and governance disorder created after the Belgrade arranged municipal elections of 11 May 2008, in order to diffuse potential conflict.
- Urgently re-establish customs regime on the border and prevent smuggling in northern Kosovo
- Ensure proper functioning of police and justice system in northern part of Kosovo, including deploying EULEX
- Do not encourage the legitimacy of the “parallel” institutions in the north, and isolate them
- Urge the European Commission, EULEX and ICO to reconsider changing of the location of the “TV Arte style” station, relocating it from Mitrovica to central Kosovo, while keeping two studios in Mitrovica

¹⁷ A part of the EU funded programmes to enhance the ability of Kosovo institutions to adopt EU standards and policies/

European Union (EU) should in compliance with this strategy and the overall commitment for integration and stability in the Western Balkans, do the following:

- Use the EU integration process with Serbia to engage constructively in a dialogue on issues of mutual concern in Kosovo
- Strengthen the political component of EUSR of ICR/EUSR in order to facilitate the fulfillment of the political criteria of EU integration both in Kosovo and in a regional context

International Steering Group (ISG) and NATO should take an active role in reinforcing continuously to all international and regional stakeholders that no adjustment of Kosovo's borders will materialize into a realistic policy.

- Guarantee in practice the territorial integrity of Kosovo.