

Statement of Kosovo, Moscow, 25/2/1998

Contact Group Meeting

Statement on Kosovo

At its Moscow meeting on February 25, 1998, the Contact Group confirmed its position on Kosovo, FRY, expressed in the New York Declaration of Foreign Ministers of September 24, 1997, as well as in the Washington Contact Group Declaration of January 8, 1998. It noted that since that time, despite repeated calls for dialogue to resolve the problems in Kosovo, there had been little progress on this vitally important issue. It also shared the valid expressions of concern by those in the region about the implication of the situation in Kosovo for regional security.

The Contact Group reaffirmed its commitment to uphold human rights values, and their condemnation of both violent repression of non-violent expressions of political views, including peaceful demonstrations, as well as terrorist actions, including those of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army.

The Contact Group agreed that both sides should be reasonable and flexible and focus on immediate steps to reduce tensions - bearing in mind the overriding need to avoid conflict and violence. It expressed continuing support for full and rapid implementation of the Education Agreement, recognizing its importance as a step for the promotion of stability in the region. It called on the authorities in Belgrade and leadership of the Kosovar Albanian community to enter without preconditions into a full and constructive dialogue to deal with the underlying social, economic and status problems.

The Contact Group reiterated that it supported neither independence nor the maintenance of the status quo. The principles of the solution of the Kosovo problem should be based on the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, taking into account the rights of the Kosovo Albanians and all those who live in Kosovo in accordance with OSCE standards, Helsinki principles and the UN Charter. The Contact Group supports an enhanced status for Kosovo within the FRY and recognizes that this must include meaningful self-administration.

The Contact Group reiterated their view that the FRY needs to address this question urgently, and that making progress to resolve the serious political and human rights issues in Kosovo is critical for Belgrade to improve its international position and relations with the international community. The Contact Group expressed its readiness to facilitate dialogue.

The Contact Group reaffirmed its intention to continue to pay close attention to the problem of Kosovo.

Office of the High Representative