Contact Group Statement – Rambouillet, 23 February 1999

Contact Group

Rambouillet Accords: Co-Chairmen's Conclusions

1. Contact Group Ministers met in Rambouillet on 23 February at the end of more than two weeks of intensive efforts to reach an agreement on substantial autonomy for Kosovo, while respecting the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

2. Ministers noted the historic nature of the Rambouillet Conference, which launched a process on the basis of the principles and basic elements adopted by the Contact Group in London on 29 January, bringing together those long divided by deep and bitter differences.

3. These have been complex and difficult negotiations, as we expected. The important efforts of the parties and the unstinting commitment of our negotiators Ambassadors Hill, Petritsch and Mayorsky, have led to a consensus on substantial autonomy for Kosovo, including on mechanisms for free and fair elections to democratic institutions, for the governance of Kosovo, for the protection of human rights and the rights of members of national communities ; and for the establishment of a fair judicial system.

4. A political framework is now in place, as set out in the Rambouillet Accords, and the groundwork has thereby been laid for finalising the implementation Chapters of the Agreement, including the modalities of the invited international civilian

and military presence in Kosovo. It is essential that the agreement on the interim accord be completed and signed as a whole. In this spirit, the parties committed themselves to attend a conference, covering all aspects of implementation, in France on 15 March, following consultations with the parties and relevant international organisations. We are determined to monitor closely that this commitment is fully respected, in order to complete the Rambouillet process.

5. The parties must abstain from any action which would undermine the achievements of Rambouillet. In particular, we expect the parties to honour fully and immediately the cease-fire which should be in place throughout Kosovo, to abstain from all provocative actions and to abide fully by their commitments of October 1998 and to comply with the relevant Security Council Resolutions. We fully support the mission and personnel of the OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission, and we insist that the parties provide for the security of KVM and other international personnel, for which they will be held responsible.

6. We pledge ourselves to work together to achieve a settlement meeting the legitimate aspirations of all the people of Kosovo. Only such a settlement can create the conditions in which a humanitarian catastrophe can be avoided. Those who prevent the completion of the interim agreement for Kosovo, or who provoke further hostilities or who threaten the security of KVM, will be held fully accountable for their actions.

Office of the High Representative