

Statement of the Contact Group, New York, 24/9/97

Statement on Kosovo

of the Contact Group Foreign Ministers

We, the Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group countries (France, Germany, Italy, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and the United States) meeting at the United Nations in New York on September 24 together with representatives of Luxembourg EU Presidency, EU Commission and the Office of the High Representative, discussed the situation in Kosovo, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

We voiced our deep concern over tensions in Kosovo. We call on the authorities in Belgrade and the leadership of the Kosovar Albanian community to join in a peaceful dialogue. We urge the two sides to create the conditions necessary for refugees from Kosovo to return home. As a first step, we call on all concerned to implement the Education Agreement without delay and to follow this up with additional confidence-building measures.

We warn against any resort to violence to press political demands and urge all sides to exercise maximum restraint.

Regarding the dispute over Kosovo's status, the position of the Contact Group countries is clear: we do not support independence and we do not support maintenance of the status quo. We support an enhanced status for Kosovo within the FRY. Such a status should fully protect the rights of the Albanian population in accordance with OSCE standards and the UN Charter. As a first step to reduce tensions, it is essential that dialogue begins.

Office of the High Representative