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Editorial



Rolling Back the Collapse

On Tuesday 16 March, Prishtinë/Priština saw its first “parliamentary evening.” Assembly Members, Ministers, political advisors, as well as representatives of the international community and civil society gathered in a cordial atmosphere. The much welcomed initiative was designed as a forum for informal political discussions, prior to next day’s Assembly plenary session. However, simultaneously one of the worst crises since 1999 dramatically unfolded.

That day, Kosovo Serb residents of the village of Caglavica blocked the main highway to Skopje in protest against an earlier drive-by shooting which wounded a local resident. The same evening, in the northern village of Cabra three Kosovo-Albanian boys drowned in the Ibar river. These two separate incidents ignited three days of rioting. The violence spread throughout Kosovo, directed mainly against Kosovo Serbs, but also against other communities and UNMIK targets.

The international community and Kosovo’s politicians were surprised by the outburst and scale of violence. On the evening of 17 March Kosovo’s senior leaders met with the SRSG and the Quint countries and appealed for the violence to stop, stressing that all issues were to be addressed through the institutions. Initially some of the central-level politicians referred to the protests to illustrate their long-standing grievances towards the international community. Various Assembly Members and Ministers engaged in trying to stop the violence by reaching out to municipalities, party branches, party activists and local media. As key interlocutors of the international community expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived weak response and lack of leadership by some of Kosovo’s leading politicians during and immediately after the crisis, Assembly President Daci gave a remarkable opening address at the Assembly plenary session on 25 March, strongly condemning all violence, in particular the violence against Serb and Ashkali citizens, against Serb houses and Orthodox churches. He expressed support for the government’s initiative to create a fund to repair the damage. Kosovo-Serb politicians during the crisis disappeared from the screen to the advantage of Belgrade officials. Various analytical reports have described how certain parts of the international and security apparatus in Kosovo couldn’t manage the situation.

The reasons leading to the collapse of society are diverse and complex. Kosovo is still struggling with many problems and there are enough reasons for people to be unhappy. Jobs are scarce and the economy is not growing fast enough to support a young population. Policy disagreements between UNMIK and the Kosovo Institutions have weakened the credibility of all governing institutions and, in turn, created the impression that Kosovo is going nowhere and cannot offer any future to its young people. The violent explosion in March revealed a deeply troubled society, lacking strong institutions and a culture not able to absorb shocks, accommodate its traumatized youth and contain its violent, criminal minority.

Then, there is the ever-present question of Kosovo’s final status. The continuing uncertainty is far from helpful in bringing about stability. While the international community has developed its major policy on “Standards before Status”, the Kosovo leaders are requesting more competencies as tools to address the growing social, economic or institutional concerns, and in doing so, to meet the Standards.

Following the March crisis, the SRSG offered a greater partnership between Kosovo’s institutions and the international community. The Standards Implementation Plan outlines in detail the road ahead: the objectives, everyone’s obligations, time-line and evaluation. This plan offers tools for Kosovo’s leaders to address the growing social, economic and institutional concerns. Unfortunately, Kosovo Serb politicians have declined to participate in the vital policy processes, even if it directly affected their communities.

To prevent a future, more wide-scale collapse, Kosovo’s institutions need to be strengthened and a perspective for the youth developed. As part of this effort – although already prepared in advance - the Prime Minister started to open new Offices on matters of reserved powers on which intensive policy consultations between UNMIK and OPM will start. OSCE and the partner organizations in the “Assembly Support Initiative” have conducted several rounds of consultations with the Assembly leadership and individual Members to reassess their work and deepen the partnership with the institution. The Assembly itself established an inquiry commission into the March crisis. Ministries and the public administration will have to focus more on implementing adopted legislation, thus ensuring rule of law.

“Rolling back the Collapse” means repairing the damage of the March crisis and developing new mechanisms to strengthen the political authority and inclusive functioning of Kosovo’s institutions. It will require monitoring, capacity building and taking policy responsibility.

*Franklin De Vrieze,
Co-ordinator Assembly Support Initiative.*

We have to find the truth and only the truth

Following the first real social crisis seen in Kosovo since the beginnings of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, the Assembly of Kosovo established the Investigation Committee into the March crisis. Prof. Alush Gashi, a Member of this Committee, sat down with ASI to discuss the pioneering work of this committee.

By Uli Steinle, OSCE

Prof. Gashi, what is the scope for the work of the Investigation Committee?

In the first session of the Assembly after the terrible events that unexpectedly took place in Kosovo, the Assembly discussed the idea of establishing an ad hoc Investigation Committee and subsequently approved it on April 9. Following the written decision of the plenary session it is our mandate to investigate the reasons and consequences of the events of March 17/18. Therefore the main focus will be on the actual events, but we will also spend a fair amount of time analyzing the causes and the consequences. In our work plan we are envisaging interviews with the PISG, with high ranking internationals in Kosovo as well as with leaders of communities, individual citizens and the civil society.

Now that the Committee is established, what are your next activities?

In the first phase we collected all the reports as well as research done on the events which are of concern for the PISG and Kosovo citizens, such as lack of extension of UNMIK sovereignty throughout Kosovo territory and the existence of unacceptable parallel structures in Kosovo. Since this is the first parliamentary Investigation Committee we had to consult with other European parliaments to examine their procedures for similar activities. We have used the good services of the Assembly Support Initiative (ASI) and expertise of the Netherlands Parliament, the Albanian Parliament and others to draft our rules of procedure,

which we are planning to propose to the Assembly as amendments to the current Rules of Procedure for future Investigation Committees.

The institution of an investigative committee is new to the Assembly of Kosovo. What do you think will be the biggest challenge the Committee will face?

Since this is the first time that a parliamentary investigation is taking place, we have to make sure and demonstrate that our intended activity is to find out the truth and just the truth. We also have to make sure that in no way this is a police investigation. This is a parliamentary investigation. We will offer our recommendations to the plenary session.

How do you feel supported by the Assembly Secretariat and by other Assembly Members?

Due to the current difficulties in the Assembly, rooms and insufficient number of staff members, the Secretariat and Presidency of the Assembly did its best by providing us with one legal advisor and a technical staff. And of course there is a difficulty of daily work because of lack of rooms, but that is reality for all Kosovo PISG.

How long do you think the work of the Committee will take until it produces its final report?

The scope of investigation is quite wide and it needs to be accurate and very viable without outside political influence. Therefore more time than the one month envisaged in the decision of the Assembly is needed.

What could the Committee re-

port add to analyses which already exist?

It's a parliamentary investigation and not a report focused to the outside. It has got to be a report of elected people and not of hired researchers or of individuals with a philosophy of denial, who point their fingers to the other side to ask for excuses.

I do not believe this is duplication of investigation. The parliament will look into the issue much wider than the actual physical destruction, which took place.

Will the Committee also invite representatives from the International Community, e.g. CIVPOL, UNMIK and KFOR to testify?

We will kindly ask them for the opportunity to share with us their opinions. Conditions on which that could be done are negotiable.

With KP members still boycotting the work of the Assembly, how will you ensure that the viewpoint of the Serbian community is given a voice in the committee?

They are part of Kosovo institutions and we expect them to behave responsibly. We will visit Serbian communities and other minorities throughout Kosovo and hear their opinions.

Do you think that the report of the Committee will be acceptable to all political groups in the Assembly – including KP?

Our duty is to prepare a report which is very reliable and supported by documents for a plenary session. It is then up to the members of parliament to analyze, debate and to decide –



Alush Gashi

which is their duty. Our mandate has started with a parliamentary decision and we will finish with the decision of the parliament, which is acceptance or rejection of the report.

Your Committee is doing pioneering work, as it is the first investigative Committee of the Assembly. Do you see it as a model and do you hope that it will become an institution within the Assembly?

In the Committee it's a consensus to do our best in establishing good procedures as well as a culture of cooperation during investigation and if this is going to contribute to be a model for future committees, we will be honored.

Members of the Investigative Committee:

Alush Gashi, LDK
Nekibe Kelmendi, LDK
Hydajet Hyseni, PDK
Gani Sadik, KDTP-OC
Zylfije Hundozi, AAK

"Let us work together"

On 9 April 2004 SRSJ Harri Holkeri addressed the extra-ordinary session of the Assembly of Kosovo dedicated to the March crisis. Following is the text of his speech.

These are difficult days for Kosovo. Three weeks ago, we experienced events which were terrible and shocking. Because of the violence, today we are not joined by representatives of the Serbian community, when their rightful place should be here, with us, discussing our common future. I am sorry for that.

In two days of brutal violence, 19 lives were taken, 730 homes were destroyed, 29 churches and monasteries - many of them cherished as the cultural heritage of all humanity - were damaged or destroyed, and over 4000 people of Kosovo were driven from their homes. I extend my sympathy for all those who were made to suffer in these terrible events, including the families of the poor children drowned in Mitrovica. I extend my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in this senseless violence. The people of Kosovo know the pain of violence from their own bitter - and recent - experience. The violence of 1999 brought the International Community to help the people of Kosovo recover from that tragedy. And now violence is repeated and it threatens to destroy the investment of Kosovo's people and their international friends - just five years later.

I have visited the places destroyed, talked to the victims, and talked to the people of Kosovo. I know that this violence was not the work of a whole society. It was the work of a small

group of people with their own scheme for Kosovo. Their scheme is of a Kosovo in which they govern through violence and intimidation, holding all the people of Kosovo hostage to their aims.

They cannot be allowed to realize their scheme. Working together we will defeat them. Violence, whatever the motive, whoever the victim, must be condemned, absolutely. Those who practice it must be dealt with by the law; those who encourage it must be isolated, totally.

The true leaders of Kosovo know this. They have already acted to show the victims of the violence that Kosovo's decent and responsible people will repair the physical damage done to homes and places of worship. Kosovo's true leaders also know that damage to Kosovo's spirit must be repaired as well. They are already reaching out with a message of reconciliation and rebuilding of social harmony.

We in UNMIK, you here in the Assembly, political leaders and members of the government, are in this together. There is only one way forward for us to learn and move forward from this disaster, and that is by working together. We all have responsibilities we must carry.

UNMIK knows its role. We will identify and bring to justice those who used violence. Police investigations have already resulted in criminal cases against many of the perpetrators of the



SRSJ Harri Holkeri

violence of March. More will be brought to trial for their crimes.

We must learn from what happened. A review body will be appointed, under independent leadership, to examine UNMIK's response to the violence. We will implement what it recommends.

UNMIK accepts also its responsibilities for creating the

economic opportunity that all people of Kosovo rightly demand. I pledge that I will continue to move the privatization process forward as the way to meet this demand. I will do so in cooperation with the Kosovo Government.

The way forward from here may be hard, but it is clear. Five months ago, the future path for Kosovo was mapped out. The

announcement of a review date for consideration of Kosovo's status made clear, as never before, the way forward, a route endorsed by Kosovo's leaders, the Security Council, the EU and all of Kosovo's friends and supporters.

In December, the Prime Minister and I, joined by many of Kosovo's political leaders, set out the vision of the future in the "Standards for Kosovo". That vision is simply explained. The standards describe a democratic society with the rule of law protecting all citizens; respect for Kosovo's rich cultural and ethnic diversity; stability and prosperity offering a decent life for all. It is a vision, once fulfilled, that will lead Kosovo into a bright future in Europe and the world community.

Last week, Prime Minister Rexhepi joined me to launch the Implementation Plan for the Standards. This sets out in clear terms the steps we have to take to achieve the vision. The plan will be hard work but it can be done. I know that Kosovo's true leaders are as determined as I am that we should move forward to achieve the vision for Kosovo that its people want.

Not all of Kosovo's elected leaders understand and support that vision. Some are promoting intolerance and sometimes even applauding those who used violence.

Some even call these criminals heroes. Some of them may indeed have joined the resistance against a repressive and brutal regime before 1999. But there is a world of difference between fighting oppression and attacking innocents. We must all understand that these people are working against Kosovo's



SRSG Holkeri, President Rugova, Prime Minister Rexhepi and Members of the Assembly

future, against Kosovo's people. And they must be rejected. The heroes Kosovo needs today are people willing to build a new society with a future in Europe.

Kosovo's people will have the opportunity to support them when they elect a new Kosovo Assembly on 23 October this year. This will be a signal that Kosovo's friends will welcome and applaud.

I am happy to say that Kosovo still has many friends. The visits we received after the violence of March from the NATO Secretary General, from European Union leaders, from the United States showed us all that they want to help us achieve the vision of the "Standards for Kosovo". Mr. Grossman's announcement of a "Support Group for Kosovo" will help us move toward that day when we begin to consider

Kosovo's future place in Europe and the world.

That place will be defined by how we achieve the standards. Progress will ensure a secure and stable Kosovo, its people at peace with themselves, a Kosovo in a stable relationship with its neighbours. But if there is no progress, the uncertainty will continue, offering only a dismal future for all of Kosovo's people.

There are voices that say it is impossible for Kosovo's communities to live together in peace. They point to the violence of March and many other acts of violence directed against one or another community. They demand division; they think that a Kosovo divided within itself is the only way forward.

It is a path of despair. There is

no future for anyone, for any community within a divided Kosovo. But, we must prove our vision is the right one by creating positive facts. The positive facts we must create are well defined. These positive facts are the "Standards for Kosovo."

The path ahead will not be easy. Almost everyone in Kosovo knows the pain of violence. Too many still know the hardship of poverty. Working together in partnership is our only way to address that real pain and hardship.

My message to you, my message to all Kosovo is to continue working toward this vision. I am your partner. With the International Community at my side, I reach out my hand to you so that we can build together the Kosovo you want and need. Let us work together.

Kosovo parties and leaders on and during the March violence



SRSG Holkeri, Kosovo Leaders, KFOR and Quint Countries on a televised address on March 17

As the security situation in Kosovo dramatically worsened and especially the Serbian and some Roma communities came under attack from Albanians, all eyes were focused on the response of the Kosovo leaders and institutions to the tragic developments. Below is a short summary of the most interesting statements by Kosovo politicians. The text also includes statements by the major international actors involved in the politics of Kosovo which may help a better understanding of the way the decision-makers handled the crisis.

The Government met on 17 March for an extraordinary session committed to the violence across Kosovo. The Government asked SRSG Holkeri to organise a meeting between all relevant actors (KFOR, UNMIK, PISG). **Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi** appealed to the citizens to remain calm despite all the emotions around the previous inefficiency. The Government

expressed regret over the tragic deaths of the three children in Cabra, which came about due to ethnic-based hatred. All the events beginning with the grenade attack on President Rugova's house through to the drowning of the children and clashes of 17 March the PM labelled as a 'cycle of violence' and called on all the responsible authorities to do their utmost to shed light on the background of the events.

SRSG Harri Holkeri, the Representatives of the QUINT States in Kosovo, and Kosovo (Albanian) Leaders on 17 March:

"The previous 48 hours have been terrible and shocking for the people of Kosovo. We have the fullest sympathy with the families of those who have died or sustained injuries. But the violence must stop and it must stop immediately. There is no excuse for any attacks or other acts of retribution. There

is never a reason to attack or intimidate one's own neighbors. Such actions are intolerable. They are a disgrace to us all. To those on the streets or on the roadblocks, and others taking part in the demonstrations, we say: "Go home now". The police and KFOR will look after the security in Kosovo and they must be allowed to do their work. Today's events and those of the last days will be investigated, and those responsible for deaths and acts of violence will be prosecuted. We have come a long way to build a society for all communities and ethnic groups in Kosovo. We cannot allow all that hard work and good will to be destroyed in a few hours. It is time for everyone to assume responsibility for themselves and work for a peaceful society for all. The press must act responsibly and not add to the tension with unfounded statements and incendiary reporting. It is in

the best interests of all people in Kosovo that order prevails and that people return to their families and their homes."

LDK Press Communiqué on 17 March: "The LDK expresses distress and concern with the situation created in Mitrovica and other parts of Kosovo. LDK asks from the bodies responsible for law and order (KFOR and the UN Police) to demonstrate an adequate level of responsibility and apply needed measures to prevent further escalation of this situation. LDK makes an appeal to all citizens of Kosovo to keep cool and contribute their utmost to the normalization of the situation. LDK also expresses condolences to the families of the children drowned in Ibar River and the families of those who died in the violence."

PKD Press Communiqué on 17 March: "The organized violence of parallel structures led by Serbia and its policy

took macabre dimensions by killing three children in the Ibar River... Intolerance has reached its climax and indignation expressed by Kosovo citizens is legitimate... Serbs are misusing the good will of Kosovo Albanians to create a society equal for all. The events that took place two nights ago and those of yesterday prove this. It is not true that the Serbs are not able to integrate but they do not want to integrate into the Kosovo society. Even five years after the end of the war, they remain committed to violence against the Albanians. This cannot be tolerated any longer. The PDK is ready to follow a policy for building a society in which all are equal before the law."

AAK Press Communiqué on March 17: "The AAK does not accept the situation created by the parallel structures and criminal gangs. The AAK considers the Serb parallel structures in Kosovo as the main factor that led to the situation created in Kosovo... These structures and criminal gangs have been inciting illegal activities and murders of Kosovo citizens. Tolerating parallel structures and criminal gangs by UNMIK and KFOR is an erroneous policy, which has only worsened and will further destabilize the situation in Kosovo. We ask from KFOR to close the border with Serbia in the northern part of Mitrovica so that entrance by Serb criminal gangs into Kosovo would be prevented. Despite the illegal activities of the Serb residents from Gracanica and Laplje Selo/Llaplaselle, we appeal to citizens to return home and not make the situation even tenser."

TMK HQ Press Communiqué on 18 March: "The TMK HQ is much concerned with the situation in Mitrovica and Caglavica. The TMK expresses

its deepest condolences to the families of the killed persons and wishes a fast recovery to those injured. Although the TMK is aware that it is exceeding its competencies, for the purpose of calming the situation down, the TMK HQ calls upon Kosovo citizens to preserve self-control and cold-bloodedness in this extraordinary situation. People's lives are the most valuable thing to us, therefore, we should give our best to protect our citizens and avoid any further escalation. We understand the citizens' concerns, but we still ask them to give a chance to our Kosovo's local and international institutions to resolve the problems of Mitrovica and other outstanding issues in an institutional manner."

Prof. Nexhat Daci, President of the Assembly of Kosovo, stated on 17 March: "In the moment when the President is attacked and when children are being forced to jump into their own death by means of pre-historic methods and when a young Serb is being wounded, what can we offer as citizens' institutions and what can we ask of them."

Hashim Thaqi, President of the PDK, stated on 18 March that "Kosovars and internationals [together] did not wage a war for a Kosovo inhabited only with Albanians." He called for "peace, wisdom, maturity, and mutual respect, as well as for respect to other ethnic groups." Mr. Thaqi referred to the fact that it was the partnership with the western world that, alongside the civil resistance, brought Kosovo liberty. He made an effort to appeal to the citizens to understand and welcome the international engagement in Kosovo, including UNMIK.

Ramush Haradinaj, President of the AAK, said on March 18: "I think there is no violence towards security forces, i.e. there is no violence against

KFOR. This is a citizens' revolt against the status quo and the existing situation will have consequences on the processes and on what we have achieved in Kosovo."

UNMIK's Spokesman Derek Chapell said on 17 March: "The situation in Kosovo is chaotic... There has been violence here before, but this time we are talking about coordinated actions. Violence has begun in several regions simultaneously, which points to the conclusion that it was pre-planned."

Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, President of Kosovo and President of the LDK, on 18 March called the citizens to return to normal life and refrain from attacking KFOR and UNMIK. "Such protests ruin Kosovo's image, harm the process of independence, and go in the interest of our enemies".

People's Movement of Kosovo (LPK) said in a press conference that the escalation of violence on 17 March came as a result of armed attacks coming from Mitrovica north and other Serb enclaves. LPK chairman (Emrush Xhemajli) said that peace and order might be

restored only if the requests of the Kosovo people are met. He criticized PM Rexhepi saying that he is not engaged on solving issues with priority but rather on dealing with pseudo-dialogues, which should in fact start only after the cessation of Serbia's aggression against Kosovo and after recognition of an independent state of Kosovo.

COMKFOR Holger Kammerhoff announced on March 18 that NATO has ordered deployment of reserved forces to Kosovo. "I have authorized KFOR Multi-National Brigades' commanders to use proportional force to secure our soldiers and innocent people and restore the freedom of movement for all in Kosovo," Kammerhoff said.

NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer before visiting Kosovo on 22 March: "Nobody in Kosovo should think, and that goes more specifically for the majority community in Kosovo, the Albanians, that by inciting violence they will bring their political ambitions closer... Indeed, it will take much longer before they can realize that."



Civil Society demonstration against the riots

How to reinstate trust

Zoran Čulafić, *Freelance journalist for B-92*

Up to couple of months ago Coalition Return (KP), according to the evaluations of many analysts, was one of the most active Parliamentary Groups in the Assembly of Kosovo and it looked like the democratic processes were entering a completely new positive phase. However the wave of violence in March brought many questions about all that was built over the last five years.

Parliamentarians of KP today do not attend the work of the Assembly and it is a big question when they will again sit. Member of the Presidency of the Assembly Oliver Ivanović deems that 17th March diminished almost all hitherto positive effects and that, in this case, the International Community in Kosovo will have to invest more efforts to reinstate the deeply shattered trust of Serbs in Kosovo's Institutions.

"Today we should take a further step, because if investigation only reaches those that are responsible for the 17th of March and fails to encompass the violence against the Serbs since 1999, it seems that we will not eliminate the cause that brought this latest violence," said Ivanović.

He considers this as one of the main preconditions for the creation of the environment in which it will be possible to reinstate the trust of Serbs in the International Community and Albanians in Kosovo.

"Such an approach would also benefit the Albanians, because this way they will release themselves of the nationalistic burden, which surely is not in their interest. Finally, it would also benefit the International Community, because with eli-



Destroyed building in Lipjan/Lipljan on March 18

mination of extremists they would have a chance to plant European democratic standards and values among people in Kosovo," evaluates Ivanović.

Representatives of KP emphasize that there is still a certain hope for some sort of joint life of Serbs and Albanians, and that it exclusively depends on the way in which the International Community will sanction all those that are responsible for the March violence.

Bogoljub Milošević, KP member from Kamenica, says that on 17th and 18th of March in Kamenica and surrounding Serb villages there was little violence.

"Here there were no killings or burning of houses, but there were attempts for all that to be done. I think that the difference is [in Kamenica] that there is some sort of multiethnic life. There are still a lot of Serbs

living here, and Albanians and Serbs are of a different mentality, more reconcilable, not as aggressive as in the other areas. Also, US KFOR took its responsibility very seriously in defending Serbs and their property," says Milošević.

One of the biggest problems for the Serb inhabitants during the unrests in March was the lack of media communication throughout Kosovo. Therefore in some isolated areas Serb politicians could not react in an adequate way.

"In Mitrovica politicians were organized better and had better access to information and media. In other places, especially in isolated enclaves, politicians were not capable at keeping up with the situation and their reactions were less adequate. We in Kamenica literary were in the informational dark and reactions of the politicians, if

there were any, could not reach the public," believes Bogoljub Milošević. He also had the impression that, unfortunately, the wider public in Serbia does not worry too much about the situation in Kosovo.

On the other hand, Nenad Radosavljević, advisor to the UN SRSG for return, emphasizes the fact that the March events achieved to get together all Serb politicians in Kosovo, even if after a couple of days the signs of division among them was obvious. The basic motive for the division at this moment, according to Radosavljević, can be found in that individuals would like to gain the best position in future talks.

"Some Serb politicians now do everything trying to impose themselves in front of the International Community as key negotiators. Also for this purpose they are trying to

gain the support of Belgrade, and Prishtina/Pristina itself," evaluated Radosavljević, while not specifying the politicians he is thinking about.

There were numerous critics for the work of the civil mission in Kosovo, especially after March's wave of violence. It seems as this is the point where Serbs and Albanians agree.

"I think that UNMIK is definitely dead after this. We were continuously reminded that the weakest spot of UNMIK is its passive behavior and unsettledness fearing the reactions of Albanian majority," thinks Bogoljub Milošević. Adding to that, Nenad Radosavljević believes that within UNMIK there is a big personal indifference towards serious approach to resolve problems.

On the other hand no Kosovar Institution deserves a positive mark related to the March events.

"Even in the case that these institutions cannot be held responsible for the violence, it is certain that they can be responsible for the creation of conditions that led to violence. These institutions tolerated such an atmosphere of interethnic hate, leading to a point where the situation could not be controlled. Unfortunately, certain Kosovar Albanian leaders did not even want to do anything to control the situation," said Radosavljević.

"I did not get the feeling that any one sincerely condemned all that happened in March. Even now in the initial attempts for the reconstruction of the houses, they are trying to prevent it in any possible way," evaluates Milošević.

After 17th of March there is a strong belief among Serbs in Kosovo that the violence was prepared and well organized and that political leaders, both



Mitrovičë/Mitrovica on March 17

centrally and locally, are fully responsible for what happened – if they are not direct abettors, at least for the fact of not doing anything to stop this violence.

Bogoljub Milošević believes that within the Albanian community, and especially in the political levels, there is a unique attitude towards the Serbs which is one of the main barriers for the continuation of the democratic processes in Kosovo.

Nenad Radosavljević agrees and remarks that the last couple of years in Kosovo the minimum has been done in establishing dialog and trust among communities.

In some parts of Kosovo there still is will for contacts among the communities. Bogoljub Milošević says that in Kamenica Albanians are trying to set up a dialog with Serbs, but the gap of distrust among the communities is still wide.

"Kamenica is specific in this view. Now Albanians are try-

ing quite a lot to improve the situation and to say, it happened, it will never happen again, but nobody believes them, because we trusted them fully for five years. I think that they would like to minimize all that happened. I had more meetings with Albanians locally and that is their classic story – while you are there they all condemn the events, however when they find themselves surrounded with other Albanians, they remain silent or try to defend or justify the deeds of some bully who killed, demolished and burned houses," thinks Milošević.

It would be a irreparable mistake if March events were forgotten and hushed, without facing the full truth openly and courageous. Otherwise no one in Kosovo could build a future based on healthy values, agree all or our speakers.

"After 17th of March Kosovo definitively is not the same as it was before and if we want to build a democratic society

here, then the whole politics up to day should be thoroughly reevaluated," states Oliver Ivanović.

It is a question whether Albanian political leaders in this moment are prepared and able for such confrontation, having in mind that at the end of the year in Kosovo there are going to be elections and many fear that any politics different from that will result with less number of votes in these elections, says Nenad Radosavljević.

However if there is no energy and a readiness in the circles of the International Community for reinitiating democratic process in highly decisive and serious manner, the chances are slim for KP to return to the Assembly, but what is more important – the process of return and reinstatement of the trust among Serbs and Albanians will be surely lost for these generations, believes Oliver Ivanović.

UNMIK and Kosovo Institutions, finding a way towards a partnership

Ilir Deda, *Office of the Prime Minister*

Partnership. A concept that has been widely used from the end of last year, reintroduced by SRSG Holkeri and requested by Kosovo's Institutions for over two years. The five joint UNMIK/Provisional Institutions of Self-Governance (PISG) working groups on implementation of Standards was the first step in trying to introduce partnership between the international administration and local institutions. The violence of 17 and 18 March, which left both UNMIK and PISG shocked and horrified, also signaled the necessity of true partnership between the Kosovar Institutions and the UN administration. But it is not enough just to say the word to build a true partnership. It takes a lot of serious work. Recent events show that efforts are being made to move towards much needed partnership.

The slow progress in matters of security and in economic development left most of the population frustrated. Kosovans watched silently the internationals and the locals playing a "ping-pong blame game". And only after the tragic violence in March did both executive bodies receive a wake up call for rapidly needed changes. Seeing the whole of Kosovo descending into chaos, and the infiltration of extremists into leading the dissatisfied population, was the last urgent call to both UNMIK and PISG to focus on the real problems that Kosovo is facing. These are the poor economy, security and fragile, - after the violence inexistent -, inter-ethnic relations.

The present legal setting cemented through the Constitutional Framework is the factor prevent-

ing the establishing of fundamentally equal relations between the Kosovans and UNMIK. The Constitutional Framework in essence puts the government in subordinate position vis-a-vis UNMIK, dividing the executive responsibilities and does not fit Kosovo presently. From the time when the institutions were established, completed in March 2002, Kosovans jointly asked for more competencies/powers in the executive branch to be handed over. This caused tensions with UNMIK. The recent calls for partnership both from the SRSG and all Kosovo's institutional and political leaders will be difficult to materialize in the present legal setting. UNMIK asks for reassurance that the government is capable of governing and points rightly towards the poor results in the "transferred" areas in education and health. Still this cannot diminish the calls for further transfer of powers. The present situation in these two areas is not a result of Kosovan incompetence, but a result of a heritage long over a decade: the legacy and collapse of communism, institutional oppression and parallel system, armed conflict, and lack of capacities as a result of all these factors. Kosovan insistence on more responsibilities over judiciary and police is also a request for increasing trust in these two institutions, which were the mechanisms of oppression during the communist era and throughout the nineties. And the refusal of UNMIK to at least strengthen the Kosovan capacities over these areas is weakening. The encouraging sign of opening six new offices within the Office



Ilir Deda

of Prime Minister (OPM) show that Kosovo is moving forward and that partnership is slowly being introduced. These offices are the ones on coordination of International Cooperation and Regional Dialogue, European Integration, Advisory Office on Public Safety, Energy Office, Office on Judicial Affairs and Strategic Policy Research and Planning Office. The purpose of these offices is to develop and strengthen Kosovar capacities in the reserved areas.

The removal of the head of Kosovo Trust Agency (KTA) Ms. Marie Fucci and the progress on the establishing new offices within the OPM is a signal of hope. There needs to be a quick move on restarting the privatization process, which would match the lowering of taxes on agricultural raw materials.

At the other end, the government has shown maturity with

its reaction to violence and the proactive role in setting up the Central Inter-ministerial Commission on managing the funds set up for rebuilding the damaged and destroyed houses, orthodox churches and monasteries. Furthermore the government has pledged its commitment to rebuilding the bridges with the ethnic communities in Kosovo, primarily with the Kosovo Serbs and Ashkali community. The PISG needs to demonstrate its seriousness in this issue by moving rapidly into concrete actions.

Jointly, the PISG and UNMIK are to work on implementing Standards for Kosovo, which are to enable Kosovo become a society closer to European, democratic standards. In this light, both UNMIK and the PISG need to show responsibility and commitment towards partnership, so the violence seen earlier in March will not be repeated.

Developing Kosovo's Agricultural Potential

Interview with Mr. Tomë Hajdaraj, Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development.

Shpresa Mulliqi, OSCE

Mr. Hajdaraj, could you tell us what are the main activities of the Committee for Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development?

T. Hajdaraj: The Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development has to discuss thirteen laws related within the scope of the Ministry and this parliamentary committee – those related to the stockbreeding, veterinary, farming land, irrigation, food quality, inspection, etc. In addition to this, our Committee has foreseen contacts with other institutions of Kosovo and abroad in order to get ideas, exchange experiences and to carry out joint projects. For example, this year our Committee has visited the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), as that country has faced transition-related problems. We assessed that the experience of our Bosnian colleagues will serve us while drafting laws, overseeing their implementation and other legal acts.

In its working program, the Committee has foreseen a visit to the Parliament of the Republic of Albania. Some time ago the counterpart Committee from Albania visited our Committee and this very fruitful meeting was a starting point to the signing of a Free Trade Agreement, especially in the area of food, though we are not happy with the dynamics of the implementation of this agreement. During the meeting and talks we have had with the representative of the Bulgarian Office here in Pristina, Mr. Kolev, we made a proposal that sometime in the spring we shall send a delegation of the committee to visit Bulgaria. We know that trade with Bulgaria has increased, especially in food



Tomë Hajdaraj

and raw materials.

In addition, our committee has foreseen in its program visits to 15 Municipal Assemblies, as agriculture is one of the most important issues in Kosovo. The conclusion of the meetings with municipal presidents, directors of departments and municipal chief executives was that the relationship between the Central Government and Municipalities were poor. It is necessary to improve this relationship.

How many laws have been implemented, and how can a citizen find out about a certain law?

Unfortunately, we are not always satisfied how laws passed by the Assembly are implemented by other instances of government, especially in the municipalities. One of the reasons why we decided to have meetings with the municipalities is to evaluate how laws are applied at the municipal level. In the near future we will convene again the directors of the municipal directorates and the representatives of the ministry so that we can discuss together the problems.

We have the responsibility for

public property land, which covers 187 000 hectares of forest and over 70 000 hectares of arable land that is not manageable at all. Now we should try to get the municipal Assemblies and the relevant ministries together for a detailed discussion about the implementation of laws.

The main problem here is the issue of ownership, or put another way how to privatize property with more than five persons claiming ownership. We have a concrete proposal for these properties through the establishment of a fund of public forests and public agricultural lands that will be managed by the Government of Kosovo, or by the SRSG if it is a reserved right, but not to hurry the privatization of this asset. Land is a fundamental issue for the existence of a society and a state as a whole, and that is why hurrying the privatization is unacceptable. I believe we will preserve the current situation until we find the true owner of the property. To think that all this can be done fast, punctually and painlessly through only one agency such as the KTA is in my opinion nonsense.

I think that all discriminatory laws should be abolished and instead there should be new laws implemented as soon as possible to conform to the standards of the European Union. This is the reason why UNMIK is here in first place.

Mr. Hajdaraj, in Kosovo there is a considerable amount of agricultural land left un-farmed. Do you think that these numerous wastelands are consequence of the lack of lawful owners, or are the existing structures incapable to deal with them properly?

In Kosovo there are three types of public property: socially owned

farming lands, other socially owned lands and collective real estates, so-called "utrina". The third kind are the mountainous areas, for which there are adequate papers, so there is full relevant documentation, but they were used by the whole village as a common good.

Farming and stockbreeding go along side by side. What is the actual situation of the stockbreeders?

I say this with great deal of pain that besides the human factor, the last ten years and the war, Kosovo mostly suffered in the area of stockbreeding. Three or four years ago, a group of experts did an assessment and estimated that the damages caused in the stock farming of the last ten years include billions of DM. And because of this we insisted that the Ministry of Agriculture should prepare a project that will evaluate the damages to the farming land, to forests, grass-plots, and especially to the stock farming. Due to the war the number of total stock was reduced by 65%. We as a Parliamentary Committee have been requesting from the Economic Fiscal Authority changes in taxation related to raw materials, including livestock since last year, but unfortunately we haven't succeeded so far. We have succeeded with seeds and white grains, though instead of citizens, the producers of flour were profiting most of this. But we do not have in mind to remain as bystanders this year, so we ask from the Directory for Policy and Development within the Ministry of Agriculture to draft a list of objectives, priorities and, if possible, the establishment of a fund for the development of agriculture. I hope that we achieve these goals.

Kosovo Police Service School reacts on March events

This article has been written a little over two weeks after the widespread violence towards life and property in Kosovo that occurred on March 17 - 19, 2004. In the months to come a detailed analysis of the causes is anticipated from UNMIK-Civilian Police along with recommendations to address the findings. The Kosovo Police Service School (KPSS) is also in the process of gathering facts pertinent to identifying potential gaps in officer training.

Tim Wilson, *Chief of Planning, KPSS*
Department of Police Education and Development

It is important to keep in mind that many Kosovo Police Service (KPS) officers risked their lives and were injured in the line of duty while facing overwhelming odds. Many others also performed their duty as best they could. Investigations into alleged criminal acts or misconduct by a minority of KPS officers are taking place and if any case is proven against them, will be dealt with appropriately. It is sometimes too easy to blame the uniform and not the individual when allegations of wrongdoing are made.

On the night of Thursday 18 March 2004, I witnessed for myself the dedication and bravery of our KPS officers and instructors at the Kosovo Police Service School. For reasons yet to be determined, a group of over a thousand people converged on the local Ashkali community adjacent to the police station and our school. Many of their homes were forced into, looted and burned by criminals hiding within the crowd. Our KPS staff assisted the few KPS officers on duty in the police station to escort over two hundred Ashkali men, women and children to safety. Initially they were taken to the police station and shortly thereafter into our school once we cut a hole in the metal fence

between the police station and KPSS. Even though the KPSS officers had already worked a full training day at the school what they did is generally expected of police officers and with little regard for their own safety, welfare or concern for their families.

The KPS has been required to mature at a vastly accelerated rate compared with, quite possibly, any other in the world. This is true not only in personnel but also resources both of which are moving towards an acceptable level as quickly as budget and time permit. Not all the pieces are in place and until two weeks ago priorities to complete the task seemed appropriate. It is clear that some of those priorities must now be adjusted to meet any future planned and organized attacks against a few communities within Kosovo, as is suspected to be the case last month. One example is the development of a command and control centre to effectively and quickly co-ordinate KPS resources throughout Kosovo. Steady progress is being made to select the necessary equipment required, as it is a costly venture that requires careful planning. Prior to these recent events the KPS has had little need to draw on all its resources to tackle orchestrated region-wide incidents of disorder. There is



Training in KPS School in Vushtrri/Vučitrn

now a new urgency to fulfill this need sooner rather than later.

In the early stages of their training every KPS officer received many hours of instruction on Human Rights, Code of Conduct and Ethical Behavior. Indeed, the current class of police students is the first to receive 20 weeks of basic training. Nevertheless, course material will be re-examined in the weeks to come to ascertain what further improvements might be made in the light of recent events.

Keeping the peace is everyone's responsibility and not just the

police. The KPSS has taught its students democratic policing concepts and practices and both the KPS and UNMIK-Police have an active Community Policing section that promotes police partnerships with community leaders and schools. Local and international authorities are encouraged to work with their local police at all levels to further this partnership and share responsibilities for law and order within the community. Regular public meetings with community leaders and police should be encouraged to listen and where possible act on the concerns of all the people they represent.

Reforming education to reach the pupils

We are living at the beginning of a new century, when rapid changes are taking place. Almost all parts of our life, starting from family relationships in society, country, and region are changing. Kosovo and its inhabitants should do their best to make education an issue of great concern for all society and not only for the institutions. Changes made these days and in future will have a long-term impact.

Venera Lljunji, Political Advisor

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

The primary purpose of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) is to ensure better education for all. Little happens in education until it reaches the pupils. To ensure that reforms actually reach the pupils, MEST works in the following priority areas:

- A unique education system: unification of the educational system requires the implementation of laws and other acts. In 2003 the Assembly of Kosovo approved two laws on education, the Law on Elementary and Secondary Education and the Law on Higher Education;

- Providing sufficient school premises, while taking into account the needs for learning and teaching, security and a healthy environment;

- Providing opportunities for mental, spiritual and psycho-physical development. This includes education for all and the development, implementation and assessment of the syllabi. These will, of course, need to be reviewed in order to ensure their high quality, as well as commensurate with European standards. So far the syllabi for grades 1, 6, 7,9,10 and 11 have been prepared and compiled by expert groups in the languages of all communities living in Kosovo. However, the Serb community has not showed its readiness to join the initiative and that is a reason why they are facing difficulties in completing the school subject curricula. A group of experts is working on the assessment of syllabuses in Serb language but

they still haven't come up with their opinion, that is to say they still haven't given their consent. Experts from UNMIK and the Council of Europe are also evaluating history textbooks in both Albanian and Serbian languages;

- MEST is trying to encourage and involve parents and the entire community in supporting the changes in educational system. Special attention will be paid to transparency and correctness with public opinion and with media on the achievements and/or difficulties faced by educational system in its path toward development;

- The major aim of reforming higher education is the investment for future generations, which will be trained and educated according to European standards. The University will be developed as an institution in view of new initiatives, innovations and the active participation in University networks. Hence, it will cooperate with institutions of higher education of other countries and will become a market-oriented institution, aiming at the development and advancement of society. University Departments will be encouraged to develop new syllabi in harmony with market demands, to promote up-to-date teaching methods, to train teachers, to ensure and maintain contacts with other universities in the region, Europe and around the world.

MEST maintains very close cooperation with the international community, UNMIK

representatives, and other government organizations operating in Kosovo. International organizations have aided and supported through many projects the improvement of education in Kosovo. The primary partners I would like to mention are: the World Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Kosovo Education Development Project (KEDP), UNICEF, Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Finnish Support Group, Swiss Contact, EAR and many other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

All the above activities and many others not enumerated demonstrate that the development of education in Kosovo is progressing slowly but in the right direction. MEST and its officials are well aware of the importance of education for the entire society. The Government of Kosovo too considers education as a priority, as the essential and most important issue for the real development of Kosovo in its entirety.

The events of 17 and 18 March shocked us all. The violence was unexpected and unforeseeable. It escalated and turned from a demonstration of dissatisfaction - expressed by the majority population on the occasion of the horrendous death of three children in Çabër - into an aggressive and violent outburst that damaged the image of Kosovo.

The MEST took a wide range of activities towards reducing the tensions and restraining pupils from taking to the streets and endangering their lives. Press conferences were held to call upon teachers, school principals and especially parents to prevent their children from joining the demonstrators. MEST as part of the Government of Kosovo will also give its contribution in repairing the damages made during those days. We also hope that the latest events will not be remembered as a failing of Kosovo and that the international community in cooperation with the people of Kosovo will work for a better future.



OSCE Facilitates Capacity Building for the 'Other Communities' Parliamentary Group

Senad Sabovic, OSCE

The Central Governance Support Team (CGST) of OMiK Democratization Department organized a capacity-building seminar for the 'Other Communities' (OC) Parliamentary Group in Ohrid. The event, which took place from 11 to 14 March 2004, was a unique opportunity for the members of the Group to detach themselves from the every-day concerns and develop an analytical approach to their problems. Part of the overall focus of the CGST is capacity-building support to Kosovo Assembly Members, and we have also offered continuous assistance to minority parties in this Assembly. In that context, we deemed useful to facilitate a seminar which would assist members of the OC Group in enhancing their conceptual understanding of minority rights, as well as build a spirit of compromise among them, so as to enable them to develop common positions on issues which impact their communities. These two components were thus set as crucial aims of this event, because they address the two outstanding needs of this Parliamentary Group: for minority rights concepts in general and for consolidating political activity.

Both of these aims were indeed grasped perfectly by the two international minority rights experts who were invited to share their knowledge with the participants and facilitate targeted discussions. Indeed, in addition to their professional



Other Communities Parliamentary Group in Ohrid

backgrounds in human and minority rights, both experts, Gregory Fabian, formerly with the OMiK Human Rights, and Clive Baldwin, from the Minority Rights Group International, also had a thorough understanding of the particular problems embedded with life as a minority in Kosovo: both have in the previous years been involved in the process of monitoring the situation of ethnic minorities in Kosovo and writing the OMiK-UNHCR Minority Assessment Reports. The modules that they designed and delivered with assistance by CGST members provided for an excellent

combination of minority rights theory and particular tools used for advancing these rights, all tailored especially to the needs of the OC Parliamentary Group. Thus, in the first part of the seminar the participants were offered information on the basic principles of minority rights, as well as international conventions and organizations thereof. This was the part in which the facilitators provided answers to the questions such as "what is a right" and "who are minorities," but also presented the catalogue of the most important international legal sources for these rights and the institutions behind them.

In addition, the participants were demonstrated how these international mechanisms are applicable in Kosovo and illustrated how they relate to the context of minority life in Kosovo.

The second part of the seminar consisted of practical exercises in which the participants were side-coached by the facilitators in developing and applying the analytical legal methodology in their parliamentary work. In these exercises, OC Group members would be tasked with interpreting relevant legal provisions with respect to specific case studies, identifying the legal issue involved in some

real-life situation, separating the political from the legal aspect, relating the issue to a single legal source of rights, and so forth. The underlying logic behind the exercises was to expand the capability of the OC members for analytical thinking in addressing the issues their communities face. The focus in these was thus on relating to the participants the practical mechanics they should apply in dealing with the issues of the people they represent, such as defining the problem and identifying the legal issue, exploring remedies to the issue, developing an action plan to tackle the issue on the basis of the previous elements and the common need of their communities, as well as implementing that plan through the channels available.

On the final day, OMiK Head of Mission, Ambassador Pascal Fieschi, came to Ohrid to once more ensure the OC Parliamentary Group of the support the Mission is giving to them as parliamentarians and their communities in general. In his address during the cocktail with the participants, facilitators, and OMiK staff, Ambassador Fieschi strongly emphasized the importance of a consolidated and coherent functioning of this Parliamentary Group.

The OMiK Central Governance Support Team is therefore proud to say that the seminar was a success in all aspects it aimed to cover. Indeed, apart from learning about minority rights mechanisms and developing tools to apply them in practice, the participants enjoyed the wonderful lake-side town of Ohrid and re-established more personal relationships between them.

"We asked ourselves: who is next?"

Gani Sadik,
Chairperson of the 'Other Communities' Parliamentary Group

We are stunned by the violent events of March in Kosovo. We have all been caught 'off guard' - as we thought violence of that scale would never again occur in Kosovo.

We feel deeply saddened for the human losses that resulted from the developments - human lives losses are irreparable losses. In addition, what was also expressed during the violence was the destructive action towards objects of historic and religious value, which has never been considered as one of the characteristics of this part of the world.

For us as 'Other Communities' the events of 17 and 18 March were also frightening - homes of the Roma and Ashkalis were targeted and violence was aimed at these communities. The logical question that we asked ourselves was 'who was going to be next on the list'. Fortunately, the violence did not spread to encompass all 'Other Communities'.

We strongly condemn the violent occurrences in Kosovo, and those who incited the violence - we consider them to be enemies of Kosovo.

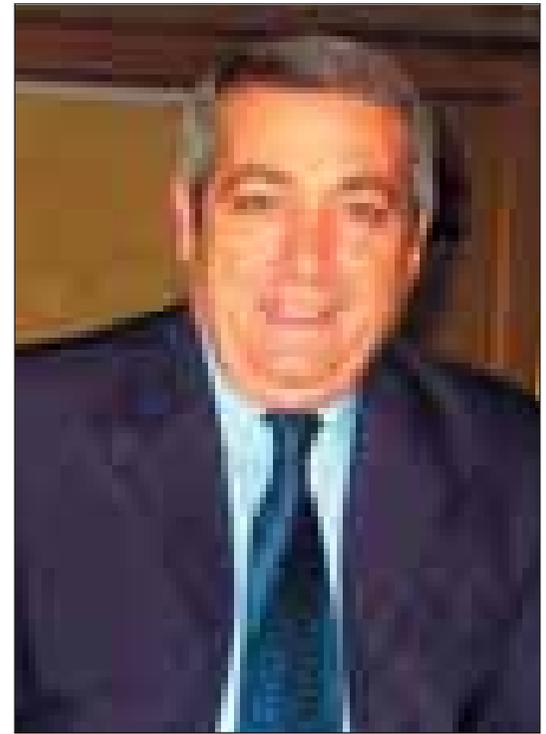
For five years now, the Institutions have together with the citizens of Kosovo and with the help of UNMIK and KFOR been laying the groundwork for different ethnic groups to live side by side in Kosovo. The Institutions have invested much work and effort in the democratization of Kosovo. The international community has

had faith in the Kosovans. Unfortunately, in those two days all has been torn up and thrown away.

Human losses cannot be restored. What has also been lost is the confidence of the whole world, among the many friends Kosovo has abroad. The whole world has been talking about the tragic events in Kosovo - is

this what we needed? Indeed, to protest and publicly express one's grievances in a PEACEFUL manner is a basic democratic principle. Violence, however, can never be justified.

For this reason, all the peace-loving people of Kosovo have condemned the violence, and so have the Institutions with the Kosovo Assembly leading this process. Again, the representatives of the 'Other Communities' have taken part in this condemnation - we must denounce violence regardless of what side it comes from. We especially condemn the attacks on KFOR soldiers, their mission here is peace-keeping and the protection of Kosovo and its citizens. On the other hand,



Gani Sadik

we welcome the decision by the Government of Kosovo to repair all the damage inflicted to historical monuments and citizens' homes during the March events

It is as a priority for Kosovo and its Institutions to regain the lost trust of the international community. Kosovo's Institutions need to cooperate with UNMIK and KFOR and thereby build partnership with them. As partners, they can jointly overcome all the difficulties that have struck Kosovo.

Kosovo has a need for UNMIK and KFOR and it is only in dialogue and partnership with them that I see a future for Kosovo.

How to get three languages speak one legislative voice?

Hubert van Eck Koster

OMIK Advisory Office in the Office of the Prime Minister

In the entire process a draft law follows, there appear to be problems with accuracy of translations which in the end result in major discrepancies in the final versions of Albanian, Serbian and English promulgated laws. These inconsistent and incoherent promulgated laws tend to lose relevance because the people or bodies who need to implement them or abide by them can't understand what they mean. It even gets worse because once a law is poorly translated then future laws tend to use the same wrong terminology, or if the terminology is corrected then the two laws are inconsistent. In addition, partly as a result of the poor translations, the responsibility of publication of the promulgated Assembly laws has been subject of long debate between UNMIK and the Assembly. In the meantime, promulgated Assembly laws were only available on the online version of the UNMIK Gazette, while UNMIK had waived any responsibility for the accuracy of the texts or for the accuracy of the respective translations of promulgated laws adopted by the Assembly. Only since recently there is an agreement between UNMIK and the Assembly in which the Assembly has taken the responsibility to publish the promulgated Assembly laws, but only on the Assembly website. In addition, the Government has started a legal initiative on an Official Gazette which should ensure proper dissemination of the promulgated Assembly laws. The disagreement between UNMIK and the Assembly on the question who is responsible

for publishing promulgated Assembly law may have been solved, unfortunately it did not contribute to solving the main underlying problem. The promulgated Assembly laws in the three languages are still inconsistent and incoherent which tend to undermine the rule of law in Kosovo. In light of the recent ethnically motivated violence there is a strong need to address these language issues, being a principal part of the efforts to integrate the Kosovo society.

Many translation problems seem to arise in the very early stage when draft laws are first prepared and/or discussed by working groups in the Government. For example, there is not an existing procedure for the working groups which would ensure that the draft law in Albanian, English and Serbian has the same content every time changes are being made along the process. Neither is there professional translation of written comments provided by external experts in the three languages of the draft law for consideration of all members of the working group. There are also problems with interpretation during the working group meetings. This is a result from the facts that there are no effective rules of procedures to guide the working groups on translation/interpretation matters and, more importantly, that there is a general lack of translation/interpretation capacity in the Government. Problems occurring in the working groups seem very hard to fix along the way and tend to remain in place after



draft laws have been adopted by the Assembly, reviewed by the UNMIK Office of The Legal Advisor and promulgated by the SRSG.

The Anti-Discrimination Law (ADL) provides a clear example of the political implications that inaccurate translations could have. In the first reading in the Assembly of the ADL, Coalition Return unexpectedly voted against this draft law. While the international community came up with all kinds of political theories why this happened, it appeared that the Serbian version of the ADL was very poorly translated. After the ADL was adopted by the Assembly in the second reading, Coalition Return even challenged the law based on Article 9.1.39 of the Constitutional Framework. In general, the Assembly has often showed its discontent with the quality of the texts of draft laws received from the Government.

Part of the problem has recently been dealt with by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), an EU funded project managed by the European

Agency for Reconstruction (EAR). GTZ set up a Standardization/Verification Cell in the OPM which carries out a compliance check on the EU acquis, the Constitutional Framework and also on translation/linguistic issues of all draft laws. However, this process only begins after the working groups have finished their considerations and have sent the draft laws to the OPM. In addition GTZ is currently working on improving Administrative Instruction 1/2002 on the Procedure for drafting and submitting laws to the Government and Assembly. This Instruction will give improved guidance for the working groups on administrative and translation/interpretation matters and will request the Government to set up Standardization/Verification Cells in all other Ministries.

Thus, there remains a lack of translation and interpretation capacity in the entire process a draft law undergoes in the working groups. Specifically, support in providing English translation is needed as allegedly this can not be ex-

pected to be provided by the Government itself. The Constitutional Framework only requires the Government and the Assembly to conduct meetings and translate official documents in both Albanian and Serbian. Even if the PISG would be willing to hire English professional legal translators and interpreters, this would be hard to implement since UNMIK offers many times the salary a KCB civil servant would receive for the same position as English translator/interpreter. However, representatives of the International Community are often members of the working groups and asked for comments of the draft laws which is difficult when the draft laws are not available in English. Professional English versions of draft laws in the working group stage would allow the international community to comment on parts of the draft that may cause irreversible obstacles in a later stage of the draft laws. So supporting the PISG in providing professional English translation and interpretation services would be in the interest of both PISG and the International Community.

Even though the Government and Assembly are clearly required to provide Albanian and Serbian versions of the draft laws, practice has showed that Albanian and especially Serbian versions often are of poor quality. Recently Pillar II set up a Task Force to review the continuing difficulties of the Kosovo administrative authorities with the language requirements and made recommendations to address the problems. Their main conclusion was that there are insufficient translation/interpretation capabilities in the ministries (and municipalities) and the Task Force recommended, inter alia, to create translation/interpretation units in all Mi-

nistries

As long as English translations are needed and until the Government has established professional translation/interpretation units in all Ministries there is critical need for immediate substantial support considering the above mentioned implications. Unfortunately, it can not be expected from the PISG to set up the required language units for delivering professional Albanian and Serbian translation and interpretation services in a short timeline. Legal experts would be needed to be able to professionally translate laws who will be difficult for the PISG to recruit considering the low KCB salary for interpreters/translators and the lack of different categories of translators/interpreters in the professions and payment scale of the civil service. Since supporting the PISG in providing professional English translation and interpretation services would be in the interest of both PISG and the International Community, and since this task can not be expected to be done by the PISG, the International Community should not hesitate in giving this support as soon as possible. Representatives of the International Community participating or advising in the legal process should take up the responsibility of delivering English translation and interpretation. While the Government should be strongly encouraged to set up the needed translation/interpretation units, the international community should start supporting the translation process, either direct, or indirect, by for example empowering local institutions with legal expertise which temporarily could be charged to support the Government by carrying out the required professional translation and

interpretation tasks. Once the language units are up and running the International Community should immediately focus on building, direct or indirect, the capacities of the language units, for example by utilizing existing local capacities to ensure that qualitative legal translation services are integrated sustainable and politically neutral into all legislative procedures. However, regarding English translation and interpretation the international com-

munity should keep on giving support as long as this is needed because the language units most likely will not be able to provide English translation and interpretation services.

These measures should contribute to a significant improvement of the legislative process concerning translations of draft laws, which hopefully results in an improvement of the rule of law and moreover a step closer to integration of the Kosovo society.

Tri-lingual Glossary of Parliamentary and Legal Terms

To help address a widespread and acute issue confronting the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), the OSCE Mission in Kosovo initiated a project in support of the Assembly and Government to compile a tri-lingual Glossary of Parliamentary and Legal Terms. This is primarily being done to facilitate the drafting of laws and the process of translating documents, but it will also help parliamentary debate on draft legislation in both committee and plenary sessions. In co-operation with the Legal Department of the Assembly Secretariat, the Office of the Prime-Minister and NDI Parliamentary Language Program in Skopje (which was engaged in producing a similar dictionary), the project committed to make a compilation of legal and parliamentary terms currently in use by legislative and governmental bodies, including on EU level. This would first be done in English and then the Albanian and Serb equivalent for each term would be found, providing a definition, synonyms and examples of terminology's proper use.

In order to implement the project, a project coordinator was appointed, a Project Board formed and an Editorial Committee established. Also, formal co-operation with various partners in the project has been instituted. The implementation of the project, which started on 1 October 2003, has been planned in five main phases: [1] identification and selection of the terms; [2] translation; [3] verification of the processed material and endorsement in workshops; [4] language review and proofreading; [5] layout and publishing in printed and electronic versions. According to the established timeline, the final output is due at the end of August 2004.

Doina Ghimici, OMIK

Experience of three Parliaments in support of the Assembly

After a three-month period of inception and assessment, the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) Project "Support to the Assembly of Kosovo" has now moved into a more active phase of implementation. The main activities, which have been undertaken by the three key experts - Mr. Heinrich Grosse-Sender, Senior Legal Reform/ Parliamentary Drafting Expert, Mr. Alfred Drescher, Senior Human Resources and Personnel Management Expert and Mr. Peter Vanhoutte, Senior Logistics Expert together with the Team Leader - cover areas, which are of high importance for the future functioning of the Assembly of Kosovo.

Prof. Dr. Nicolas Maziau, Team Leader EAR-Consortium of the three Parliaments, Adviser to the Secretariat and the Presidency

In the field of institution building, the Project Team has launched three principal activities with the ambition to reach a number of changes in the functioning of the Assembly before the next election.

[1] Developing a strategy for reorganization of the Presidency and the Secretariat. This issue has been dealt with by Ms. Corinne Luquiens, a short-term expert for the Project and Director of International relations in French Assemblée nationale. Based on her proposals, the Project Team will elaborate an overall plan to improve the organization of the Secretariat, make it more efficient and more adapted to the needs of a Parliament faced with developing tasks. Proposals covering the Presidency will be looked at as well to make it more efficient and transparent.

[2] Reducing the number of committees in the Assembly is an issue of particular importance. The Assembly, as presently organized, has 19 committees, 2 main committees and 17 functional committees. Taking into account the number of Assembly members (120), so many parliamentary committees is a source of inefficiency. The Project's proposal is to reduce this number, possibly by 10, by merger. New positions such as vice-president and "rapporteur" would help to improve the legislative capacity of committees, the quality of

legislation and their ability to inform adequately the Plenary. At the same time, one condition for the success of this reform would be to make it financially neutral for Assembly members. Discussions are ongoing and have been received very positively by committee chairs. Hopefully a decision on this question could be adopted before summer time and enter into force after next election.

[3] Improving the legislative process between the Government and Assembly is one of the key issues, which needs to be urgently addressed. The Project Team is working on this issue together with representatives of the Government to reach a solution on how to establish proper and permanent relations between the Prime Minister's Office (OPM), ministries and the Assembly. An assessment of the situation was made by two short-term experts, Mr. Alberik Goris, Deputy Head of the Legal Department of the Chambre des Représentants de Belgique and Mr. Joachim Kehrhahn, Secretary of the Committee for Food and Agriculture in the Deutscher Bundestag. The objective is to propose to the PMO and the Assembly a memorandum of understanding mentioning the different issues on which both institutions agree to work on to improve the daily contacts between the Executive and the Legislative branches. It is a basic



Nicolas Maziau

Représentants de Belgique, who came this February to evaluate the possibility to create a Legislative Council in Kosovo. If established, this new institution would be independent from the Government and the Assembly and would be composed of highly qualified lawyers. Through its exclusive advisory capacity, the Council would review the consistency of

requirement of a parliamentary democracy to authorize Government representatives to attend at any time committee work when a draft law is under discussion. At the same time, it is necessary for ministries and PMO to provide better access to information to members of committees. Subsequently, the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly and the Rules of Procedure of the Government should be amended.

In this regard, the mission of Mr. Michel Leroy, president of chamber in the Belgian Conseil d'Etat, and Mr. Ronald Mees, Director in the Chambre des

legislation and its conformity with the Constitutional Framework and European standards. Following the missions of both experts, the Project Team intends to propose a draft law to be discussed at a later period.

In the legal sphere, the Project is concentrating on two issues:

[1] Technical assistance to committee work, especially for six committees considered important by the Project: the two main committees, the committee for Judicial, Legislative and Constitutional Framework matters, the committee for Trade and Industry, the committee for Health and the committee for



Political engagement of youth and credibility of the institutions

By Lulzim Zeneli,
LDK Member of the Assembly

The engagement of youth in politics should not be considered as a taboo theme. There is an entire generation of Kosovo leadership that seems to misunderstand the intention of the young generation to get involved in politics so that they could build a political career.

At the same time, the engagement of youth should in no way be limited at the level of formal engagement in political and social developments.

The engagement of youth in political and institutional activities, in Kosovo and abroad, is more important now than ever. Young Kosovans should contribute their energy, will and courage to tackle practical problems in their areas of interest.

The political engagement of the younger generation with new ideas and pro-western visions,

should in no way be misunderstood, on the contrary, this should be welcomed as a sound ambition to integrate in the process, and not stay aside, as passive observers, which is now the case.

After all, it is important to get involved or else our society takes the risk of becoming a passive society and consequently move towards undesirable directions, which would have a very negative impact in the entire process.

The engagement of young Kosovans in politics nowadays, does not have a formal meaning only.



Lulzim Zeneli

The involvement of young Kosovans in politics is a proof of their creativity and energy.

The next question is at what level has our youth become

engaged in politics? I think that, our youth should be better represented at all levels of society and of leadership.

Only an adequate representation of younger generations at all levels of decision-making, would give a greater credibility to our institutions.

The events of March 17th and 18th gave the worst possible example. Unfortunately, many of those who committed violent acts were young people, teenagers.

Such actions damaged not only the image of Kosovo, but of the entire society in general. That's why, our institutions are now in a tight spot, since a lot has to be done, whereupon both local and international institutions have to double their efforts in order to improve the situation in all aspects of life and more importantly- strengthen the institutional credibility, for which we have to be optimistic!

Transport and Communications. The input of the Project is taking place through a standardization unit, which will be developed by the Project's Senior Legal Local Expert, Mr. Virtyt Ibrahimaga together with short-term international and local experts and the Secretariat to the Assembly. Mr. Frédéric Brédillot, Administrator in the Commission for Economic Affairs of the French Assemblée nationale was the first expert to come in February and provide his assistance. He was asked to review the compatibility with the European standards of the draft laws on Energy prepared

by the Committee on Trade and Industry with the help of USAID-Baring point.

[2] Critical comments on the Rules of procedure are currently under preparation. A short term expert of the Project, Mr. Marc van der Hulst, Director of the Legal Department of the Chambre des Représentants de Belgique came to make an assessment. His report proposes some technical amendments to make the legislative process more workable. Indeed, the Rules of Procedure appear to be far too complicated, which include some contradictions, and tend to slow down the capacity

of Assembly to pass legislation. These comments will be submitted to the Assembly and discussed again with all relevant parties, including ASI partners.

In the field of administration, the Project Team is preparing statutes for the personnel to be proposed to the Assembly by June 2004. A short term expert, Mr. Laurent Klein, Director of Archives and former Head of Personnel in French Assemblée nationale came to make an assessment and together with the project's key expert will propose new statutes, which should, along with a career system, help to further develop

a professional parliamentary civil service.

Finally, regarding the logistics support to the Assembly, the Project Team has started to prepare a plan of technical refurbishment, which will include upgrading the telecommunications network, develop an information network, but also will cover some renovation of the building. Mr. Frank Blum, coordinator of ICT in the Deutscher Bundestag has been tasked to make proposals. The project's key expert is also currently preparing new procurement rules for the Assembly.

Promoting Tolerance

Edita Tahiri, *Member of the Assembly*

A year long journey for promoting tolerance through the program of American Jewish Committee (AJC) and Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (FNS) was indeed a unique experience for me. After the first initial inspiring debate on tolerance in Skopje/Macedonia and Sinaia/Romania followed a journey through tolerance in the United States. For the participants coming from post-communist but also "post-war countries" such as myself this program succeeded to add precious ideas and spirit to our mind and soul.

The Program on Promoting Tolerance of the year 2003 focused on the role of history in promoting tolerance in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. Participants came from these regions as well as from the Commonwealth of Independent States. Our diverse background, as emerging leaders and opinion shapers of new democracies, allowed us to engage in a very creative debate to look into the impact of history on relationships between people and states. In the workshops held in Skopje in April 2003 and Sinaia in May 2003, we discussed the Balkan history and the prejudices it has created. We tried to analyze how far could history influence the identity of a nation and of an individual. And then we turned to the future and tried to reflect on questions such as: can history teach us to be tolerant? Or can tolerance be built on historical injustices? Country reports in which participants reflected their personal and national sufferings and injustices in the past were an important contribution to the debate. It was, I believe, the common view that overcoming "historical injustices" is one of the main challenges in building a better future.

In this context, in my country report I reflected on the tragic past of my nation and particularly of the past ten years. I have spoken for the perspectives of building a just and tolerant society in Kosovo and in the Southeastern Europe. I stated that the tolerant future can be built only by correcting the injustices of the past. In terms of the Balkans, this would mean adopting a just political and legal framework to solve outstanding issues. Whereas, for Kosovo as one of the major unsolved issues of the Balkans, this means recognizing the right to self-determination of the people of Kosovo and allowing them to have a safe home in an independent state. I elaborated further that eradicating fear is a precondition for building tolerance and that is what Albanians can accomplish by having their safe home / state. I concluded by saying "We can not expect a nation to act justly if they are not given justice."

The debate on the role of history in promoting tolerance brought up thoughtful approach of participants. The range of useful ideas marked this work. We all seemed to be ready to engage in a big challenge of helping ourselves and Europe go beyond the past. Indeed we made a step forward to a new spirit – a spirit of dialogue, understanding and tolerance. And I think we got ready for a journey to the United States with the aim of taking up some of the United States spirit and democratic experience.

First on the program was the movie "Remember the Titans" a true story about tolerance. Then we went to the T.C. Williams High School in Fairfax, Virginia, where we met the "Titans of tolerance". We talked to their ancestors, saw their pictures and felt the living spirit of something very



Edita Tahiri

human – the unity of students of diverse race. In days to come we were given the opportunity to see great variety of people and experts serving the goal of tolerance. We were introduced to American initiatives aimed at encouraging respect for diversity in their society. It was the whole mosaic of actors and ideas running the engine of the American democracy. We listened and participated in a debate on promoting tolerance through NGOs, with special focus on race, ethnicity, social issues, religion, etc. We learned what government does to promote tolerance, among other things; we saw the enormous negotiating work done at the Justice Department's Community Relation Service to resolve racial conflicts. I personally thought Kosovo institutions must integrate similar practices.

After Washington D.C. we visited New York, the great city and the place of the AJC headquarters. There, we were received by the Head of the AJC, Mr. David Harris and his collaborators. After listening to the visionary speech of Mr. Harris, it was not difficult for me to understand why the AJC had such a successful history. The stay in New York was marked

by the visit to "Ground Zero", the monument to the victims of the tragedy of 9/11.

Later, the participants split into different groups to pay a visit to AJC chapters throughout United States. I visited the Detroit Chapter and learned about its wide range of activities with the Jewish community and its multicultural activities with other communities. I was impressed with their annual project "Do Not Forget the Stranger" who aims at welcoming non-Jewish leaders. The unforgettable moment of this visit was the warm welcome at the Traison's Family for the Shabbat Dinner respect. I also attended the Shabbat ceremony in a Synagogue and was particularly impressed with the intellectual debate that was taking place there. I was honored to be asked to give a speech in the Synagogue.

The last part of this Program was our reunion in Chicago. At dinner we exchanged our views and impressions of the chapter visits. The visit to Chicago, organized by the AJC Chicago chapter, focused mainly on the issues of the inter-religious understanding and cooperation. We met with representatives of civil society, municipal government and Chicago police to learn about their ideas and practices. The highlight of this visit was an evening discussion about Catholic-Jewish relations at the North Shore Congregation Israel.

I can not conclude this report without underscoring the memorable visit to the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. It was my second visit (my first visit was in 1993 when it was newly opened), and the message "For the dead and the living we must bear witness" is as valid as ever. It recalls the history of my nation, too.

"We need to invest in young staff of the Assembly"

Interview with Sali Rexhepi, Head of the Table Office of the Assembly of Kosovo.

By Ali Caka, UNDP

Mr. Sali Rexhepi, could you explain us as the Head of the Table Office what is the role of the Table Office and what are its functions?

Its role and the importance is as follows: receives all the legislative related documents, draft laws, amendments, official questions by Members and other requests. It systemizes and distributes legal documents to the Members or brings forward questions by Members to the ministries.

The Table Office is responsible for supporting the Presidency of Assembly starting with the preparations of agendas, documents distributions for its sessions, drafting minutes from Presidency meetings, as well as implementation of decisions, conclusions and recommendations approved by the Presidency.

It is responsible for plenary sessions of Assembly, starting with the preparations of agendas, distribution of amendments, draft laws, resolutions, compiling minutes and materialization of decisions, conclusions and recommendations reached in the Assembly.

Soon the Service for Standardisation and Proof-Reading in three languages (Albanian, Serbian and English) will be established, which will also function within this section.

What are the basic rules re-lated to the submission of amendments for draft laws?

The procedure for submitting an amendment is regulated with Work Regulation 29 of Assembly. Every parliamentary group or a deputy can submit an amendment or resolution to the Table Office, not later than



Sali Rexhepi

5 days prior to the debate on that resolution draft law. Each amendment discussed by any parliamentary commission or any report of their recommendation is registered in the Table Office and distributed to the Members and other relevant institutions.

Has the Table Office received adequate training?

The section's staff is qualified, had working visits to the French Assembly and Belgian Parliament. Certainly, there is a need for further trainings and to gain experiences from other parliaments or any other parliament with long parliamentary tradition.

But what would be most preferable for future work is as follows: To have proper staff selection and invest in their proficiency rather than in older generations. Not spend time in training aged working staff as our experience showed that they have been poorly equipped even after the trainings to carry out their duties and responsibilities. To give priority to the practical work, through concrete working

tools in relevant areas where the Secretariat staff is engaged into. It would be better if one of the staff in units is selected and sent on a one month working visit to any of the parliaments that supports the work of Assembly of Kosovo. Civil servants should have extended contracts at least up to three years. And provide them with health and social insurance. Their salaries should be increased due to living costs, to be stimulated for work and be able to live from their work.

What are the main challenges you face in your capacity of the Head of the Table Office?

That would be work overload, and the lack of sufficient staff to carry out what needs to be done.

What was in your opinion the greatest achievement of the last two years of the Assembly?

The greatest achievement of the last two years of the Assembly would be the establishment of a modern administration. This includes: an Assembly secretariat filled with civil staff (insufficient) to support the work of the Assembly; some laws have been approved and some others are being processed, which are in concord with the legal standards of EU; and gaining solid experiences, which will serve well to the work of legislation.

How you appreciate the overall international support received by the Assembly of Kosovo during its first legislature?

The support of international staff has been great. In the beginning of the work of Assembly, they were the cells out of which the Assembly Secretariat with local staff has emerged and grown. And later the international staff, through different ways:

consulting, instructions, and trainings have played an active role in supporting the work of Assembly, and we greatly appreciate it.

What is now needed is more training and investing. Investing in young working staff.

ASI partners have started preparing their assistance programmes for the next Assembly. What should be, in your opinion, their major priorities?

ASI should focus its activities in the following areas: training of the staff to draft documents; cooperation between Assembly Groups as well as among Assembly members and civil servants who support them; organizing intensive courses of English language; training the Assembly staff for using and applying the Informative Technology in Assembly activities, as well as getting acquainted with experiences of parliaments with parliamentary tradition.

What do you think that should be improved in the work of the Assembly Secretariat in general, and what improvements could be made in the functioning of the Table Office in particular?

I think that in managing positions of the Assembly Secretariat should be appointed only people with managerial sense, personal integrity, professional people as well as people of high morals, who are not prone to corrupt practices and who have good interpersonal skills. This will ensure the functioning of a modern, professional and politically unbiased administration. What's more we should fight against the phenomenon of privileges made based on party affiliation and nepotism.

Committee End-of-Mandate Report: A step in building institutional memory

Doina Ghimici, OSCE



The first Assembly of Kosovo is approaching the completion of its mandate. There were three challenging years for both Members and staff that had to break fresh grounds for a new democratic institution and face all difficulties of the start-up phase. Although the Assembly of Kosovo, neither from political nor from procedural point of view has reached the stage of a fully stable, functional and productive legislature, the experience that has been accumulated during this first term in office should definitely be recorded, analysed and passed on to the new Assembly, which should turn it to good account. In the same time, this will be part of the effort of building an institutional memory and will also serve the purpose of rendering international assistance most sustainable.

Committees of the Assembly of

Kosovo faced many challenges, most of them inherent to the inception phase. Progressively, their functioning has improved and Assembly Committees proved that they can handle law proposals without undue delays, while have also started exercising their legislative initiative right. The eventual adoption on a wide scale, despite initial reservations, of the practice of public hearings, is an example of successful capacity building efforts of international donors. Another positive remark concerning Committee functioning regards the establishing of normal working relationships among Assembly Members across political and community spectrum at Committee level. However, the executive oversight function has not been properly exercised either by the Assembly in general or by its individual Committees. Insufficient co-ope-

ration of some committees with corresponding ministries and not enough responsiveness on the part of certain ministries contributed to delaying the legislative process in the Assembly. In addition, over the past three years, variations have been noticed

in the work of parliamentary Committees. Lately, for instance, committees often failed to attain the quorum necessary to conduct meetings. As a consequence, at the plenary session held on 28 April, the Assembly had to postpone the adoption of three draft laws based upon the fact that relevant committees had not reviewed respective draft laws. The Assembly President decided to convene a meeting with committee chairpersons to address this problem.

Work efficiency and quality vary from one Committee to another. It is obvious that performance of individual Committees is directly related to the professionalism and dedication of Chairpersons. Some Chairpersons did the best to ensure that their Committee complete legislative tasks in due time and also tried to get involved in controlling government activities and ma-

king their own evaluation of the situation on the ground in a particular field. Several Committee Chairpersons have also taken the initiative to draft annual reports on the work of their Committees.

We believe that it would be important to urge all Committee Chairpersons to compile an end-of-mandate report in which relevant experience of the Committee, including both positive and negative aspects, as well as thoughts and ideas which from various reasons could not be implemented during present legislature would be reflected. Chairpersons may wish to write the report themselves in consultation with Committee members or delegate this task to another member willing to become the rapporteur for the Committee. It is important that information included in the end-of-mandate report is as accurate and relevant as possible and contains both quantitative and qualitative assessments. For that reason, ASI partners are ready to help designing the format of these reports and propose a template and a set of guidelines including examples of questions that would need to be answered in the report. The OSCE sponsored Assembly Website would be a perfect means for making the summary of Committees' work known to the public. Additionally, in autumn OSCE will be ready to facilitate the publishing of a compilation of the end-of-mandate reports.

Recent Support Activities

EWPPP consults on upcoming elections

Within the framework of the East West Parliamentary Practice Program (EWPPP) programs Mr. Valk and I, both politicians from The Netherlands, visited Pristina from 12 to 15 February. During the visit meetings were held with the leaders and politicians of many political parties. The main topics in the discussions were the forthcoming central elections and the work of Committees in the Assembly.

In discussions it was also clear that the general consensus was that the composition of the Assembly would change considerably after the elections. The profit derived from a seminar to address the work of committees would be more effective if the new members could also attend.

The meeting with Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi was very useful. He informed us about the level of legislation and the difficulties encountered in drafting laws and getting them adopted in time by the Assembly. The role of the international organizations, including the OSCE and UNMIK, was also highlighted.

Last was a visit made to Ismet Beqiri, President of the Pristina Municipal Assembly, and some of his councilors. It became quite clear that Pristina is hampered by similar problems as all cities, only more aggravated. More money is needed to fulfill all the relevant municipal duties, but also the people of Pristina need to be educated in the private tasks citizens of a town have to perform.

Jan Dirk Blaauw
Political & Economic Consultant, EWPPP Netherlands

Freedom of Information Training

Training on Freedom of Information (FOI), also known as the Access to Public Documents Law took place as scheduled in mid-February and conducted by Dr. Sherrie Wolf. The training was conducted on six separate days, beginning on Friday, 13 February, on which date the training for 29 OSCE Democratization Officers was held. This was mostly an opportunity to demonstrate to the OSCE the manual and the training methods NDI planned to use. The OSCE plans to hold training sessions itself on the FOI law and asked NDI previously to share the training manual.

For the week of 16 - 20 February, Dr. Wolf conducted training every day during the week, devoting Monday and Tuesday to members of the Central Assembly, and the rest of the week to ministry officials from both the central PISG and the Municipal governments. The total number of trainees attending during the entire week was 50, 30 of which were various central and municipal-level Ministry officials and 20 were elected members of the Assembly of Kosovo. In addition, Mr. Edmond Efendija gave an informal training session to a couple of members of the Assembly staff.

The trainees who attended showed lively interest, especially when the training exercises were conducted with the ministry officials. These training exercises simulated events that might transpire when private citizens approach a government official for access to a particular document.

Members of the Assembly were not given these exercises, because the emphasis in Assembly training was centered upon using the law as an oversight tool. However, Assembly members did ask a number of

insightful questions and engaged in discussions on various points of the law during their training sessions.

Follow up procedures to the training are being discussed, and will be determined over the coming weeks.

Pat Cadle
NDI Legislative Support Program Director

SPEAK Project Mission to the Albanian Parliament

The SPEAK Project Manager traveled to Tirana, Albania, on February 23rd 2004 with Ms. Norah Babic, Program Officer with the Inter-parliamentary Union.

The visit enabled the sharing of lessons learned from the SPEAK Project with the Albanian Parliamentary Secretariat and Members of Parliament (MPs). Parliamentary officials were briefed on the progress made in laying a proper foundation for setting up an electronic document management system at the Kosovo Assembly. The visit also helped to develop synergy between the Assembly of Kosovo and the Albanian Parliament that could lead to future joint collaboration. The focus would be on information sharing and lessons learned in the use of information technology for the reform and management of legislative work. The mission gained an appreciation of the well organized Library and Research Unit that serves the Albanian Parliament.

The mission met with the Speaker of the Albanian Assembly, Mr. Servet Pellumbi as well as the Secretary General, Mr. Artan Banushi and a number of his staff.

The visit to Tirana was also an opportunity to attend a Seminar on The Role of Parliament in the European Integration Process that was sponsored by the Inter-parliamentary Union in co-operation with the Albanian Parliament and UNDP-Albania.

The agenda featured a number of presentations including the following:

- Mr. Ledio Bianku, Director of the European Center and Chairman of Club 2002 on the role of parliament in the integration process;
- Mr. Selami Xhepa, Albanian Center for International Trade regarding the Economic Aspects and the cost of integration for Albania;
- Mr. Mihail Baciu, MP, Parliament of Romania on The Role of the Integration Committee of the Romanian Parliament in the Integration Process;
- Dr. Juhasz Laszlo, European Integration Expert, Parliament of Hungary on the Role of the Hungarian Parliament in the association negotiations and the association implementation with the EU in Hungary;
- Mrs. Ermenlinda Meksi briefed the group on the Albanian process.

The seminar was very interactive and received very positive comments from the approximately 50 MPs and Assembly staff who attended. A complete set of presentations given in Albanian has been provided to the Assembly of Kosovo and UNDP-Kosovo. As well, the presentations of Mr. Baciu and Dr. Laszlo are available in English.

Roger F. Roy
Project Manager, SPEAK Project in Support of the Assembly of Kosovo

ASI Mission Statement

As the inter-agency coordinator of democratization programs to support the Assembly of Kosovo, the Assembly Support Initiative (ASI) seeks to strengthen and professionalise the Assembly of Kosovo in developing skills so that it may become a stable, functional and productive legislative assembly, operating in accordance with the rule of law and on behalf of all communities and citizens equally.

Members of ASI will work to bring resources together in a common pool in the furtherance of this goal. The work of ASI will focus on a democratic political culture based upon knowledge of and respect for democratic rules of procedure, transparency and accountability to the public, developing and implementing a legislative agenda, oversight over the Executive and respect for multi-linguality of the Assembly.

As the inter-agency coordinator of support to the Assembly of Kosovo, ASI supports the Assembly via conferences and training, workshops with the Committees, technical assistance on the legislative process, advise to the Presidency, Committees chairpersons and individual Assembly Members, working visits to other parliaments, training for the legislative staff and interpreters of the Assembly. The work of advisers and consultants to the Assembly and its Committees is also part of the ASI-coordination.

Currently participating in ASI:

Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (FNS), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, East-West Parliamentary Practice Project (The Netherlands), European Agency of Reconstruction (EAR), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in co-operation with National Democratic Institute (NDI), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in co-operation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Consortium of French, German and Belgian parliament, OSCE Democratization Department and the Assembly Secretariat with the active support of the Office of the Prime Minister, UNMIK's Pillar IV (EU) and the country offices in Pristina of Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States.



<http://www.kuvendikosoves.org>

<http://www.skupstinakosova.org>

<http://www.assemblyofkosovo.org>

Pictures in this Newsletter:

UNMIK-DPI (p.1, 4, 8, 9); Bota Sot (p. 6); Lumni Rama (OSCE, p. 3, 5, 10, 11, 15, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24); Hasan Sopa (OSCE, p. 7, 16); Lubomir Kotec (OSCE, p. 12, 13, 20, 24); OSCE (p. 14, 16)



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