

Minister for Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern TD Announces Ireland's recognition of the Republic of Kosovo

29/02/2008

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern T.D., announced today that the Government has recognised the independence of the Republic of Kosovo.

The recognition of Kosovo by Government decision follows a resolution by the Kosovo Assembly on 17th February to declare Kosovo independent. Minister Ahern signalled then that he would recommend that the Government recognise its independence.

The Minister said: "We regret that years of talks failed to produce an agreement between Belgrade and Pristina. The reality is that the legacy of the conflict of the late 1990s made the return of Serb dominion in Kosovo unthinkable, and also undermined the prospects for a long-sought compromise. After almost nine years under UN-led interim administration, more than 90% of Kosovo's population wants independence, and this is supported by most of our partners in the EU, many of whom have already recognised Kosovo."

"Ireland strongly supported last year's proposal by the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Kosovo, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, which recommended that Kosovo's status should be independence, supervised by the international community. This proposal included detailed provisions concerning the promotion and protection of the rights of communities and their members. I am pleased to note the commitment by Kosovo to implement fully the Ahtisaari recommendations.

"I know that the independence of Kosovo is painful for Serbia, and difficult to accept. And I want to underline that recognition of Kosovo is not an act of hostility toward Serbia. I hope that Serbia and Kosovo can soon begin to put their tragic shared past behind them and move toward a brighter future together in Europe. I look forward to future friendly relations between Ireland and Kosovo."

Note for Editors:

On 17 February, the Kosovo Assembly adopted a resolution which declared Kosovo to be "a democratic, secular and multi-ethnic republic, guided by the principles of non-discrimination and equal protection under the law". It undertook to implement the obligations set out in the Ahtisaari proposal for a final status settlement, emphasising "those that protect and promote the rights of communities and their members".

At the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) on 18 February, EU Foreign Ministers underlined that Kosovo represented a unique case because of the legacy of the conflict of the 1990s and the fact that it has been under international administration since 1999 as provided for in UN Security Council Resolution 1244. It noted that "Member States will decide, in accordance with national practice and international law, on their relations with Kosovo."

As of 28 February, a number of countries have already recognised Kosovo, including the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Belgium, Latvia, Estonia, Luxembourg, Australia and Turkey. Many others, including a large majority of EU Member States, have indicated their intention to do so.

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Press Office
29 February 2008

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