



United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

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SRSG REGRETS SERB DECISION

PRISTINA---SRSG Bernard Kouchner expressed his regret over today's announcement by the Serb National Council that they will be absent from next week's meetings of the Interim Administrative Council and Kosovo Transitional Council.

However, he said, "we understand the decision as a protest and a sign of outrage over the recent violence, which has caused a high degree of anger and distress among the Serbs and within the international community."

"I must join the SNC in condemning in the strongest possible terms the upsurge of violence over the past week, which appeared to have been concentrated and organized within two regions of Kosovo and which has terrorized innocent people," Dr. Kouchner said. "As I said earlier this week, these acts only strengthen the hands of extremists and serve to destabilize Kosovo to the detriment of everyone else living here."

"As I said in the IAC to all our partners and repeated publicly, we anticipated a possible increase in tension at this particular period, which coincides with the anniversary of our arrival in Kosovo. Yet we cannot yet this throw us off course.

"We will make every possible effort to end this spate of violence and bring the perpetrators to justice. To this end, we have greatly increased KFOR and UNMIK joint security operations in those two regions. And vigorous investigations are ongoing."

"At the same time, for more than six months, we have been working to improve the lives of Serbs in other ways, by providing assistance to health services, education, telephone communications and road repairs. There is more to be done. And we fully intend to continue these efforts in co-operation with the Serb National Council and the whole Serb community."

Dr. Kouchner said he would also facilitate the efforts of the Serb National Council to present their case at the United Nations in New York.