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SRSB holds Town Hall Meeting in Obilic

Pristina--SRSB Bernard Kouchner, pursuing his tour of Kosovo yesterday with a town Hall meeting in Obilic, said the most important event facing the people of Kosovo in the near future was the local elections planned by UNMIK on 28 October.

He told the crowd in the local cultural centre that building a democratic Kosovo without fear and discrimination must be their main objective, in order to show the world that they are ready for self-governance. He offered a pact between UNMIK and people of Kosovo. "If you succeed to have local elections freely, openly and without violence, UNMIK will help you to go to the next step of self-governance"

"You were brave enough to fight for freedom, and you will be brave enough to fight for peace and democracy", he said.

Unfortunately, he noted, events of the past few days showed that violence has spread from inter-ethnic crime to violence between Albanians, referring to the murder two days ago of the Pristina director of Planning, Reconstruction and Development, Rexhep Luci. The victim had been responsible for implementing the law against illegal construction.

"He was a man of honour who fought by the rules of a civil society, but not the rules of gangsterism and war lords," Kouchner said.

Concerns expressed by the inhabitants of Obilic included serious environmental problems caused by the nearby power plants, pensions that have been not paid, unemployment among youth, and the issue of detainees and missing persons.

The SRSB said he was encouraged by the recent nomination of Ambassador Henrik Amneus by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as Special Envoy on Persons Deprived of Liberty. He will deal with the issue that had devastated lives of many families in Kosovo and that continues to haunt peoples' every-day lives. The international community is working together in order to solve this question, Dr. Kouchner said.

On unemployment, Dr. Kouchner said that in order to reactivate or start industries, people of Kosovo must give confidence to investors and donors. They could begin by holding free, fair and democratic elections without violence, he said.

The SRSB met earlier with Kosovo Serb representatives and discussed security and employment issues in the three predominantly Serb communities of Plementina, Babin Most and Crkvena.