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Kouchner: Milosevic Must Be Brought to Justice

PRISTINA---SRSG Bernard Kouchner today strongly distanced himself from the remarks made by Jiri Dienstbier, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human rights on the situation of Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Dienstbier is reported to have stated yesterday that “the only possible deal, and the most important thing for Mr. Milosevic is to have guarantees that if he leaves power he will not be prosecuted and will not spend the rest of his life in prison”.

Dr. Kouchner expressed his concern that such comments could severely damage the confidence of the people of Kosovo in the commitment of the United Nations to human rights principles and the punishment of persons responsible for the atrocities experienced by the peoples of the Balkans over the past 10 years.

“The families of these victims are still suffering today as are the families of the thousands of missing persons from Kosovo. Furthermore, the Milosevic regime continues to hold hundreds of prisoners from Kosovo in Serbia proper for political reasons. I feel that the insensitivity of certain statements may serve only to increase the sorrow and pain”, Dr. Kouchner stated today.

Yesterday the UN Secretary-General underlined the fact that the Special Rapporteur acts in his personal capacity and does not represent the views of the Secretary-General or any inter-governmental organ. In addition, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) responded to Mr. Dienstbier’s comments by stating that there is no intention to withdraw the indictment against Mr. Milosevic.

However, Dr. Kouchner said that it is his duty as the highest UN official in Kosovo to directly reassure the people of Kosovo of the UN’s commitment to bringing all suspected perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law to justice.

“It is unacceptable for a person who is supposed to be responsible for protecting and promoting human rights to say such a thing”, Dr. Kouchner said. “The victims of human rights violations are entitled to a remedy. Clearly, the indictment issued by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia indicates that Mr. Milosevic bears criminal responsibility for atrocities committed in Kosovo during the armed conflict in 1998-1999. It is completely unacceptable for the victims of these outrageous crimes to see the man who is responsible for ordering such crimes to walk free. Furthermore, there can be no peace and reconciliation in Kosovo until those indicted with human rights violations are brought to justice”.