

**Statement by Mr. Gokhool on the situation in Kosovo –**  
**27 March 2002**

I thank Mr. Hédi Annabi for his update on the situation in Kosovo. We also welcome Mr. Vukobratović, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and we thank him for his statement. We are also thankful for the detailed briefing attached to the copy of his statement, and we note with great satisfaction the steady progress towards the final solution to the problems in Kosovo. I would like to commend here the efforts of all the parties in the consolidation of the reconciliation process in southern Serbia.

My delegation congratulates the parties in Kosovo on reaching an agreement on the coalition Government, and on the choice of their President and Prime Minister. The compromise reached demonstrates the good will to work together towards creating a democratic, multi-ethnic and stable Kosovo. Indeed, this development reassures the international community of the strong determination of all parties to build a bright future for all the people of Kosovo.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Steiner for all the efforts he has made to facilitate the dialogue between the parties. We wish Mr. Steiner could be present today to share his views on the challenges facing Kosovo as the new institutions embark on the path to self-rule.

We are happy to note that all the ingredients are in place for the Provisional Self-Government to start full operations and take over executive powers from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). UNMIK has so far fulfilled efficiently its duties of assuming interim governance, but now the reins are in the hands of Kosovo's leaders. We encourage them to sustain the momentum and show that they can govern effectively and fairly for all the citizens of Kosovo.

The agreement reached last month by political leaders contains the right mix of all the necessary components that will ensure the smooth running of the Provisional Self-Government institutions. We

note, among others, respect and promotion of democratic principles; free and equal treatment towards all of Kosovo's inhabitants, without discrimination; the creation of conditions conducive to reconciliation and tolerance among different communities; and the adoption of measures to foster rapid economic development. All these appear to be promising, but it is one thing to agree on paper and another to put it into practice especially in the case of Kosovo, where a democratically elected Government is functioning for the first time. The test is now for the political parties to show that their will to operate a functioning parliamentary democracy is under way.

Of no less importance is the economic situation of the province. So far, donors have contributed largely in the reconstruction of the economy. Kosovo needs the full engagement of the donor community, as it has suffered from decades of under-investment. We therefore call on all the donors to sustain their assistance to the province. We hope that the request made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner, during his recent visit to European countries will be met with a positive response.

We also welcome the decision of the Provisional Self-Government to adopt the legislation necessary to create the conditions for a market-based economy and to encourage private direct investment. If Kosovo is to stand on its own feet, it cannot depend solely on foreign funding and a single means of revenue collection. Private direct investment in the province will open up opportunities for the people to engage in gainful activities, and it will also positively contribute to creating a stable society. The sooner the decision makers adopt the necessary legislation, the better it will be for the province to reap the benefits. At the same time, the high rate of unemployment can be addressed with the participation of the private and public sectors, and with more investment.

A flourishing economy will also help in bringing internally displaced persons back to their homeland. A high rate of returns can only be possible if a safe and secure environment is guaranteed for the minority communities, and if property rights are restored to them. It is for the political leaders to put all their ideas into constructive action in favour of the integration of minorities into Kosovo's society.

The total elimination of arms and ammunition from the province is equally important if a secure environment is to be created for all the inhabitants. In that regard, we welcome the weapons-amnesty programme set up by UNMIK and KFOR to combat organized crime. We urge all Kosovo to cooperate with UNMIK and KFOR to wipe out all illegal possession of arms and ammunition.

Lastly, we encourage the leaders of the Provisional Self-Government to enhance dialogue with Belgrade in line with the provisions of the Common Document, signed in November 2001. Working together in the High-level Working Group on such practical issues as cooperation in security and tackling organized crime, missing persons and minority rights will surely reinforce mutual confidence. We were happy to learn that the Yugoslav authorities yesterday returned to Kosovo all Albanian detainees held in Serbian prisons since 1999, in accordance with the commitment under the Common Document.