

**Statement by Mrs Huree-Agarwal on the Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo – 6 November 2002**

I join other speakers in thanking Mr. Guéhenno for his comprehensive and useful briefing and for introducing the Secretary-General's report.

The municipal elections held last week in Kosovo were yet another step towards democratization of institutions and increasing collective participation in the day-to-day affairs of the province. We are pleased to note the elections were conducted in a rather peaceful manner.

The 54 per cent turnout at the elections is most encouraging to my delegation, despite several attempts to boycott the elections. It is regrettable that the Serb community did not participate in the elections in large numbers, and as Mr. Guéhenno rightly pointed out, their low turnout has decreased their capacity to take part in the decision-making process.

The election of 262 women is also encouraging. We believe this is the right channel through which the concerns of vulnerable groups, especially women and children, could be addressed when framing policies and programmes.

The vision the Council has set for Kosovo will never be achieved without the full participation of all communities in the work of the provisional self-government. They should continue to cooperate with the United Nations and its Mission in Kosovo by participating in the institutions set up by the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the best interest of everyone.

We hope all communities will work together to meet the standards set up by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner. We also welcome the political will demonstrated by the Government of Kosovo to track progress in this regard.

The existence of parallel structures in the Mitrovica region continues to hamper the successful governance of the province. In this regard, we welcome the seven-point plan aimed at in co-governance and decentralization developed by Special Representative Steiner. The success of this strategy will not be possible without the cooperation of the Belgrade authorities, and our delegation hopes that they will work with UNMIK in achieving the plan for the Mitrovica region.

We are also pleased to note that the number of incoming internally displaced persons and refugees has surpassed that of the outflow of minorities from Kosovo. We believe that necessary action should be taken to address the security problem as the result of these mass returns. Proper planning is of utmost importance to insure the safety and security of those returnees.

The incidents reported in paragraph 38 of the Secretary-General's report indicate that more needs to be done to ensure the smooth integration of the internally displaced persons and refugees in the social life of Kosovo. In this regard, we welcome the recent initiative taken by Mr. Steiner to establish a task force that will oversee and invigorate the process of return to the province. However, without concrete support from all local political leaders, donors, host countries of Kosovo, refugees and the local population, the process will not achieve the required result. We therefore call on all of them to join efforts to this end.

We understand that the tasks are enormous and the challenges are difficult, but it will not be long before a peaceful, democratic, multi-ethnic Kosovo is established in line with European standards.

Finally, we pay tribute to all those who are working relentlessly in this regard.