Security forces:
A segment in the status negotiations

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I commend the organizers of this conference for providing the opportunity for initiating discussions on a number of topics that are extremely important. Among those questions, the issue of security is at the top of the list because of the attention it attracts not only among Kosova's citizens, but also among citizens of other countries in the region.

To some it may seem that it is too early to address the question of reviewing security in Kosovo, but I believe that the truth is different — issues within the domain of security should already have been addressed, in order to build up proper experience within local structures and in order to establish sound institutional relations between the different segments which are responsible for security. In this way we will build the foundations for a true democracy, in which Kosovars are active participants in formulating policies and in making other decisions that directly affect their lives.

Today, this obvious delay is being recognized, in a way, through the engagement of a British team, which — according to a request by the SRSG — should hand in a proposal for a new security structure in Kosova. After six years of half-baked solutions and a plentitude of improvisations, this will hopefully bring about sustainable and just solutions — in accordance with the best experiences of democratic countries.

I hereby want to briefly present some of my views on the future of this security segment, in the most comprehensive meaning of this term — actually on turning emergency services into police and defense systems.

Kosova has already taken a few steps towards the establishment of adequate security structures. First of all, considerable work has been done in expanding, strengthening and empowering the Kosovo Police Service. Further, Kosova already has a nucleus of emergency services with the Department for the Management of Emergencies (within the Ministry of Public Services) and the Civil Protection Brigade of the KPC.

However, Kosova also has the KPC, which the local population see as the future defense force and it already has an almost military structure, a military look, and it thinks like an army and it lives like one and has the vision to become an army. Yet, for the time being the KPC has a civil defense mission, which after the creation of the Civil Protection Brigade has fallen entirely on the shoulders of this Brigade. Thus, the mission of the remaining part of the KPC remains unclear at this point.

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In Kosova we need true defense capacities to protect the lives of citizens. Therefore, the question arises how to transform the KPC into a local defense force. Kosova needs such defense capacities for a number of reasons. The Balkans is still far from satisfactory stability and is still not safe from a number of security risks — ranging from those related to the consequences of weak states to the problems that have to do with global threats, international terrorism, organized crime, smuggling etc.

There are, in my opinion, three general reasons why Kosova needs its defense force.

1. Statehood. It is difficulty to imagine the state of Kosova without its defense force, under civil control and in the service of all Kosovars. The core segment of statehood is national security, which, in turn, is the basis for political stability and economic development. Kosova’s national security cannot depend on partial solutions, with dual systems applied on its territory, but only with a coherent, local (meaning multiethnic too), politically neutral and professional structure.

2. The capability of being responsible for your own fate. KFOR will not stay here forever and it will not be doing even those tasks that we could possibly do. At a time of serious threats to world security in the form of terrorism and other contemporary dangers, the engagement and priorities of international forces may easily shift to Kosova’s disadvantage. Consequently, it is necessary to have local forces which are capable of responding to any possibly external threat. At a time when some of the neighboring countries still remain at the level of unstable entities, Kosova’s defense forces would neutralize the effects of such potential instability in the neighborhood (region) or at least they would engage rapidly and serve as a buffer until the main guarantors of security (NATO forces) involve themselves.

The fact that new threats are not of a conventional nature makes it even more important to have Kosovar defense forces, properly equipped and with adequate intelligence and counterintelligence services. These structures would have a supporting role for the police and other responsible services in charge of preventing and eliminating risks to our borders. From fighting different terrorist organizations to combating arms trafficking, such a supportive role for the defense forces would be indisputable. Let me put this clearly — law and order would without any doubt be under the control of a civilian commanding structure with the police at its command. However, there are many examples when defense structures are used efficiently — from gendarmerie to the role of the British military, known as ‘Military Support for Civil Authorities’. In other words, this would mean, in our context, that support to civilian authorities would be provided only when such authorities specifically require this, in support of border and customs authorities and in protecting the cultural heritage and historic sites of different communities.