



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
1 October 2020

Original: English

---

## United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction and Mission priorities

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#), by which the Council established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and requested me to report at regular intervals on the implementation of its mandate. The report covers the activities of UNMIK, and developments related thereto, from 16 March to 15 September 2020.

2. The priorities of the Mission remain to promote security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and in the region. In furtherance of its goals, UNMIK continues its constructive engagement with Pristina and Belgrade, all communities in Kosovo, and regional and international actors. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Kosovo Force continue to perform their roles within the framework of resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#). The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo continues its presence in Kosovo, in line with the statement by the President of the Security Council of 26 November 2008 ([S/PRST/2008/44](#)) and my report of 24 November 2008 ([S/2008/692](#)). The United Nations agencies, funds and programmes work closely with the Mission.

#### II. Key political and security developments

3. Several overlapping and intersecting challenges confronted the people and institutions of Kosovo. Foremost among those was the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, which, beyond its impact on public health, carried serious economic, social and political repercussions. The spread of the virus accelerated during the latter half of the reporting period, causing loss of lives and livelihoods throughout Kosovo and putting a major strain on the capacity of public institutions to respond to the crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic was accompanied by a political crisis, as the government led by the Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, of the Movement for Self-Determination (Vetëvendosje), was voted out through a non-confidence motion initiated by its coalition partner, the Democratic League of Kosovo, just two months into its term of office. The announcement in June by the Specialist Prosecutor's Office that war crimes and crimes against humanity indictments had been filed in The Hague against the President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, and the leader of his former party, the Democratic Party of Kosovo, Kadri Veseli, brought further complexities to the political scene in Pristina. These developments and challenges have rendered the



political and security circumstances in Kosovo more fragile, at a time when the world is striving to combat and manage the pandemic.

4. On 18 March, as Kosovo was reporting some of its earliest confirmed COVID-19 cases, the Democratic League of Kosovo withdrew from the coalition with Vetëvendosje, which had garnered the majority of votes in the October 2019 elections, and initiated an ultimately successful motion of non-confidence in the Vetëvendosje-led government of Albin Kurti. Inter-party tensions had been building and public differences aired, including on calls for the unconditional removal of the 100 per cent import tax on good from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina that had been put in place in 2018 by the former government led by the then Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj. After the dismissal by Mr. Kurti of the Minister of Interior and the Democratic League of Kosovo's first Vice-President, whom he had accused of openly contradicting the government response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Democratic League of Kosovo left the coalition, calling it an unacceptable violation of its coalition agreement with Vetëvendosje.

5. On 25 March, 82 of the 120 members of the Assembly voted in favour of the motion of non-confidence against the government of Albin Kurti. In response, Mr. Kurti and his party called for the immediate scheduling of new elections. However, President Thaçi, following consultations with most political parties, concluded that a majority of parties favoured the formation of a new government. On 30 April, following the lack of response of Vetëvendosje to the repeated requests made by President Thaçi to identify an alternate candidate for Prime Minister, he invited the Democratic League of Kosovo, given that the party had won the second-highest number of votes in the previous election, to form a new government. Vetëvendosje challenged that action in the Constitutional Court of Kosovo, which, on 28 May, upheld the decision of President Thaçi. Amid continuing protests from Vetëvendosje and widespread public dissatisfaction with the political upheavals during a public health emergency, on 3 June, the Assembly narrowly approved the new government to be led by the Vice-President of the Democratic League of Kosovo, Avdullah Hoti.

6. The new government depends on a one-vote majority in the Assembly and is comprised of a mixture of smaller Kosovo Albanian-led parties, including the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo and the Socialist Democratic Initiative for Kosovo, along with the Kosovo Serb party Serbian List and parties representing other non-majority communities. The Cabinet of Prime Minister Hoti is slightly larger than that of the previous government, with four Deputy Prime Ministers and 16 ministries (formerly 15), including 3 women ministers, compared with 5 in the preceding government.

7. Upon taking office, the new government prioritized addressing the pandemic, facilitating economic recovery, combating crime and corruption, advancing the dialogue with Belgrade and progressing on European integration. It also lifted the non-tariff restrictions, including reciprocity measures, on Serbian goods that had been imposed by the previous Vetëvendosje-led government, but indicated that they could be reinstated if necessary progress was not achieved in the dialogue with Belgrade. Continued political infighting, however, delayed the passage of legislation on managing the pandemic and mitigating its economic impact. A new law on "preventing and combating the COVID-19 pandemic" was eventually passed on 14 August, some three months after the Constitutional Court had recommended urgent legislative changes to support the measures introduced by the government to contain the virus. In July, following repeated unsuccessful attempts due to a lack of quorum, the Assembly also ratified five international financial agreements with the World Bank, the European Union and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in support of, among other things, modernizing the tax and customs administration of Kosovo and a supplementary budget law. In August, the Assembly

ratified two other financial agreements of great importance for economic recovery, namely, an agreement with the World Bank and a loan agreement with the European Union for macro-financial assistance. In response to the pandemic, the government proposed a 1.2 billion euro economic recovery plan, which remains pending with the Assembly.

8. On 24 June, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office announced the 24 April filing at the Kosovo Specialist Chambers of a 10-count indictment against President Thaçi, Mr. Veseli and other individuals. They were charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, enforced disappearance of persons, persecution and torture. The indictment is pending a review and confirmation by a pre-trial judge of the Specialist Chambers, which is before the end of October, in accordance with the applicable rules of procedure and evidence. The Office stated that the charges were being disclosed in advance owing to "repeated efforts by both Hashim Thaçi and Kadri Veseli to obstruct and undermine the work of the KSC [Kosovo Specialist Chambers]". Prime Minister Hoti, reacting to the announcement, called for respect for the procedures of the Specialist Chambers. Mr. Veseli said in a statement that the "true motives" of the Prosecutor were "entirely political". President Thaçi described the allegations as "false", while promising to resign if the indictment was officially confirmed by the Specialist Chambers.

9. In a televised address on 18 July, President Thaçi characterized the process as "another one among 21 years of accusations, allegations and fabrications about the Kosovo Liberation Army and the struggle of the people of Kosovo for freedom and sovereignty". Meanwhile, the Assembly adopted a non-binding resolution on political and civic unity in the protection of the values of the people of Kosovo calling, among others, "to protect the liberation war of the KLA" (Kosovo Liberation Army), addressing the issue of missing persons and ensuring justice for "all victims of Serbia's crimes" and the impartiality of the Specialist Chambers. Some 20 million euros were approved within the 2020 Kosovo budget to support the potential indictees and their families. In addition, a debate was renewed on a previously submitted draft law on "the protection of Kosovo Liberation Army war values, which failed to be adopted on its first reading, on 13 August, owing to a lack of quorum. International actors and local human rights organizations have strongly criticized elements of this draft text, noting that they may violate freedom of expression and other fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution and international norms. On 14 August, the Kosovo Liberation Army Veterans Association petitioned the Assembly to amend the Law on the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Office to extend their jurisdiction to crimes committed by Serbian forces. On 24 August, President Thaçi submitted a request to the Assembly to amend the Constitution to provide clarification on the end of the mandate of the Specialist Chambers and the Office.

10. Those developments took place against the backdrop of continuing public debate and speculation on the viability of the Democratic League of Kosovo-led coalition government. On 6 August, Vetëvendosje announced that it was in the process of collecting signatures in the Assembly to initiate a motion of non-confidence against the Hoti government. In addition, political actors have launched public discussions on the election of a new President in the event that President Thaçi resigns before the end of his mandate, in April 2021.

11. The resumption of work by the municipality of Deçan/Dečani on a transit road to Montenegro through the special protective zone of the Visoki Dečani monastery, in contravention of applicable laws, sparked renewed political and security tensions during the reporting period. Following the resumption of the road upgrades within the special protective zone in mid-July, the Eparchy of Raška-Prizren appealed to the Kosovo government and the international community to prevent further encroachment into the special protective zone. Belgrade also decried the new construction works,

with the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, requesting that the issue of the special protective zones be included in the agenda of the next session of the European Union-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina talks. On 16 August, following a visit to the municipality by Prime Minister Hoti, construction was halted. On 27 August, upon a fact-finding visit to the area, the Pristina-based representatives of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, who were accompanied by officials from the European Union, OSCE and the Kosovo Force, called upon the Kosovo government to uphold the Law on Special Protective Zones and to ensure the implementation of the 19 May 2016 decision of the Constitutional Court upholding land ownership rights of the Serbian Orthodox Church. To date, however, the municipality has not committed itself to a permanent cessation of the unlawful road works.

12. From mid-March until the end of May, when pandemic restriction measures were in force, the Kosovo Serb communities in Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Novak/Novakë, Prizren, Istog/Istok, Gjilan/Gnjilane and Obiliq/Obilić recorded an increase of criminal incidents directed against their property and livelihoods. On 1 May, my Special Representative, alongside other high-level international representatives in Kosovo, expressed concern over the increase in such incidents and urged Pristina authorities to prioritize law enforcement for those communities, to swiftly identify the perpetrators and publicly discourage such acts.

### **III. Coronavirus disease impact and response**

13. Notwithstanding an early response and strict measures against the pandemic, which had initially led to a relative containment of the virus, the situation began to worsen early in June, coinciding with the easing of the restrictions to permit the restart of regular economic activity. Faced with a dramatic increase in the number of cases, the government reimposed certain restrictions in July. Those included night-time curfews, bans of public gatherings and the mandated wearing of face masks in public indoor spaces. Compliance with the measures was inconsistent, and their effect on slowing the rate of infection has been limited. By the end of the reporting period, at least 15,000 cases of COVID-19 and more than 600 deaths were reported. Among other measures, an effort is under way to increase testing capacity in Kosovo, with the support of the international community. The Kosovo public health system has, in many cases, been stretched beyond its existing capacities, including available beds for COVID-19 patients, testing, essential medical equipment, and numbers of qualified caregivers and other medical staff. As at 9 September 2020, approximately 11 per cent of all recorded COVID-19 cases were health-care workers.

14. The response to the pandemic in Kosovo was also affected by the existing parallel operations of the Government of Serbia-supported public health structures in the Kosovo Serb-majority areas. Although, in many cases, ad hoc working-level cooperation functioned well between the Belgrade- and Pristina-run systems, such cooperation was not systematic. The two systems have, in large part, been able to implement practical arrangements for the free movement of test samples, essential medical supplies, personnel and patients. In the early phases of the pandemic, divergences were common between the restrictions imposed by Pristina- and Belgrade-sponsored institutions, which became gradually more synchronized.

15. UNMIK and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have remained operational during the pandemic, while implementing risk-reduction measures, including telecommuting. UNMIK and the United Nations Kosovo team continue to closely coordinate efforts to ensure staff welfare and continuity of operations, as well as to support local authorities and institutions. My Special Representative set an early

priority of upgrading in-house medical capacity to serve all United Nations staff on the ground. Accordingly, UNMIK was equipped with reliable equipment, facilities and specialized personnel to treat United Nations staff and their dependents, except the most critical cases, which required medical evacuation. My Special Representative was personally engaged with authorities in Belgrade and Skopje to secure agreements for the medical evacuation of United Nations staff and their dependents. UNMIK and the United Nations Kosovo team also cooperated with the National Health Institute for testing of staff with symptoms. However, the testing capacity of the Institute has been constrained owing to high demand, and the Mission has entered into agreements with other local laboratories to conduct reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction tests. As of the end of the reporting period, there had been 23 confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection among United Nations staff and their dependents in Kosovo, which included 17 cases among UNMIK staff and dependents (with 14 recovered and 3 still active cases) and 6 among the United Nations Kosovo team staff and dependents (with all recovered).

16. UNMIK, in close coordination with the United Nations Kosovo team, has directed available resources towards supporting public health institutions and the population of Kosovo, directing such support, in particular, to help to meet the urgent needs among the most vulnerable populations. The Mission adapted much of its programmatic activities towards responding to the COVID-19 emergency. It distributed food and hygiene packages, personal protective equipment and equipment for distance learning to all municipalities in Kosovo. Responding to requests from health authorities, UNMIK also provided medical supplies and personal protective equipment to the Ministry of Health, police and firefighters, the Kosovo Judicial Council and Kosovo Correctional Services, among other institutions. UNMIK initiated a range of projects for young people and on gender tailored to contribute to the response to COVID-19, including support for domestic violence shelters throughout Kosovo and the production and distribution of face shields to health workers.

17. The United Nations Kosovo team has been providing key support to the government in responding to COVID-19, under the overall guidance of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, by coordinating the emergency assistance to cope with the outbreak. The World Health Organization (WHO), in close coordination with other United Nations Kosovo team agencies, has played a central role in advising and supporting Kosovo public health institutions in combating the pandemic. As the infection rates accelerated during the summer, WHO has deployed additional technical missions and standing expertise to Kosovo and facilitated the procurement of essential equipment such as oxygen concentrators and intensive care unit ventilators. Experts have been deployed to assist in scaling up capacity in terms of surveillance, risk communication and infection prevention, as well as case management and testing. United Nations Kosovo team members have implemented more than \$27 million in bilateral and multilateral assistance since March. In June, the United Nations Kosovo team completed a socioeconomic impact assessment and an inter-agency response plan focused on health, social protection, economic recovery, macroeconomic response, and social cohesion and community resilience, in order to strengthen the government's response to COVID-19.

#### **IV. Northern Kosovo**

18. On 16 June, the mayor of North Mitrovica and President of the Serbian List, Goran Rakić, resigned in order to take up the position of Kosovo Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government and Administration. Following a consultative meeting with representatives of political parties and the Central Election

Commission on 22 June, President Thaçi announced that, owing to COVID-19-related circumstances, a special local election in North Mitrovica would not be scheduled until October 2020. On 21 June, voting in Kosovo took place for the Serbian parliamentary elections. As in past such elections, OSCE facilitated the collection of votes, albeit with multiple additional health precautions in place, which proceeded without security incidents or major irregularities at 20 locations and 140 polling stations in Kosovo.

19. On 2 April, the mayors of North and South Mitrovica, accompanied by the Commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Kosovo Force, held a joint press conference on the main bridge across the Ibër/Ibar River, in which they appealed to residents of both municipalities to adhere to the COVID-19-related public health measures. That was the first time since October 2018 that the mayors had issued a public statement together.

20. On 29 July, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Kosovo and the Kosovo Police General Director visited the Kosovo Serb-majority municipality of Zubin Potok to discuss security challenges facing the municipality amid the pandemic, including ensuring more coordinated law enforcement efforts to combat organized crime across municipal and community lines.

## **V. Normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina**

21. Efforts continued in order to resume the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, which had been suspended since November 2018. On 3 April, the European Union appointed Miroslav Lajčák as Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and other Western Balkans regional issues. The appointment was welcomed during the European Union-Western Balkans Summit on 6 May by European Union and Western Balkans leaders, who also reconfirmed the region's European perspective and a commitment to intensifying their engagement in support of the political, economic and social transformation of the region. Mr. Lajčák undertook preparatory visits to Pristina and Belgrade in June to discuss the modalities of future meetings in the context of the dialogue.

22. On 10 July, France and Germany hosted a virtual meeting with Serbian President Vučić and Kosovo Prime Minister Hoti, which was followed by a virtual meeting on 12 July chaired by the European Union with the two leaders to mark the official resumption of the European Union-facilitated dialogue. In-person meetings of the leaders followed on 16 July and 7 September under the auspices of the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, and Special Representative Lajčák and at the expert level, focusing on issues related to missing and displaced persons and economic cooperation. Prior to the meeting of 7 September, President Vučić and Prime Minister Hoti issued a joint statement in which they stressed that they attached the "highest priority" to European Union integration and to continuing the European Union-facilitated dialogue. They also committed themselves to redoubling their efforts to ensure further European Union alignment in accordance with their relevant obligations. At the same time, the parties continued to present diverging narratives on the expected outcomes of the dialogue, with Pristina insisting on mutual recognition and Belgrade emphasizing the importance of implementing existing agreements.

23. On 4 September, under the auspices of the United States, President Vučić and Prime Minister Hoti met in Washington, D.C., and signed separate commitments in which they agreed to move forward with "economic normalization". According to the documents, Belgrade and Pristina pledged, among others, to implement the agreed

re-establishment of a railway connection and the construction of a highway and to work with the Government of the United States on a feasibility study for the purposes of sharing Gazivode/Ujmani Lake as a reliable water and energy supply. Both parties further agreed on having Kosovo join the so-called “mini-Schengen” zone of which Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia were already members. The document also includes agreements by Pristina and Belgrade to suspend, for a period of one year, their recognition and derecognition campaigns.

24. In April, members of the Regional Group of Continental Europe of the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity approved a connection agreement with the Kosovo Electricity Transmission System and Market Operator, which allows the latter to join the regional network of operators in Europe. The agreement was signed on 30 June, authorizing the Kosovo Electricity Transmission System and Market Operator to leave the Serbian regulatory area within a larger regional “control block”, covering also Montenegro and North Macedonia, and operate as an independent regulatory zone with Albania. The decision is also in line with the 2013 European Union-facilitated energy agreement between Belgrade and Pristina which, among other things, provided for the Operator to become the official transmission system operator in Kosovo.

## **VI. Returns, reconciliation, cultural heritage and community relations**

25. During the reporting period, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded 189 voluntary returns by members of non-majority communities who had been displaced within and outside Kosovo. The returnees included 102 women and 87 men (116 Kosovo Serbs, 22 Kosovo Roma, 36 Kosovo Egyptians, 12 Kosovo Albanians and 3 Kosovo Bosniaks). This brings the total number of displaced members of non-majority communities who have found durable solutions in Kosovo since 2000 to 28,547, including 14,021 women and 14,526 men (12,207 Kosovo Serbs, 7,670 Kosovo Egyptians and Kosovo Ashkali, 3,990 Kosovo Roma, 1,878 Kosovo Bosniaks, 1,464 Kosovo Gorani, 1,294 Kosovo Albanians, 21 Kosovo Montenegrins, 19 Kosovo Turks and 4 Kosovo Croats). There remain 16,052 displaced persons within Kosovo (7,404 women and 8,648 men), as well as 69,627 persons with displacement-related needs across the Western Balkans. Most of the approximately 200,000 displaced persons from Kosovo residing in the region are in Serbia.

26. On 29 May, a technical working group composed of senior representatives from Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina and Skopje held a virtual meeting under the auspices of the “Skopje process”, the regional initiative facilitated jointly by UNHCR and OSCE, to promote durable solutions for displaced persons from Kosovo. The participants assessed the implementation of previously agreed action points and committed themselves to developing action plans under five main areas: (a) property rights; (b) security; dialogue and reintegration; (c) personal documentation; (d) data management; and (e) solution planning.

27. On 28 March, the Kosovo Office of the Language Commissioner published its annual report on compliance of Kosovo municipalities with the Law on the Use of Languages. In the report, it was found that non-majority communities in Kosovo continued to face obstacles in gaining access to judicial remedy, property registration and health care owing to inadequate provision of materials and services in all official languages. On 15 April and 9 June, Kosovo Serb civil society representatives lodged formal complaints with the Office of the Language Commissioner concerning the

non-compliance of Kosovo institutions with the Law on the Use of Languages in disseminating COVID-19 information.

28. On 3 August, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched a needs assessment and monitoring project with its local partners in the Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality to improve the access of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities to information on COVID-19 preventive measures and social services, and to safeguard their livelihoods. This is the first of a series of projects to be implemented in 12 Kosovo municipalities by November 2020. UNHCR, UNMIK and other international actors continued to support the Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Egyptian and Kosovo Roma communities in obtaining personal documentation and resolving civil status issues to enable their access to public services. In responding to the COVID-19 crisis, the United Nations Kosovo team has reinforced its support for the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities, in particular in the areas of nutrition and hygiene, health, education, civil documentation and social inclusion, while continuously assessing the impact of the pandemic on these communities to ensure targeted assistance, with a focus on women and children. During the period under review, no contributions were made to the United Nations trust fund in support of the Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Egyptian and Kosovo Roma communities affected by lead poisoning in Kosovo, leaving the fund without the ability to support their urgent needs.

## **VII. Rule of law and human rights**

29. During the reporting period, Kosovo prosecutors and courts issued indictments and judgments in several high-profile organized crime and corruption cases. In April, 19 individuals, including a member of the Assembly of Kosovo and three former ministers, were indicted for alleged abuse of official position or authority in relation to the privatization process of the Kosovo Energy Corporation in 2013. An indictment was also filed on 23 April against five Kosovo police officers on charges of organized crime, abuse of official position or authority, and smuggling of goods. In May, the Special Prosecution Office of Kosovo filed an indictment on charges of organized crime against seven individuals accused of unauthorized transport and sale of weapons and unauthorized purchase and sale of narcotic substances. The Office indicted a further 33 persons for abuse of official position or authority, accepting bribes, smuggling of goods and unauthorized ownership and possession of weapons.

30. At the same time, local civil society organizations continued to report slow progress in addressing corruption and organized crime, expressing concern over the often-lenient sentences imposed. On 23 June, the Kosovo Law Institute published a report that revealed, on the basis of findings resulting from a systematic monitoring of 334 corruption cases and 1,180 court hearings throughout 2019, that most cases of high-level corruption and involvement in organized crime had either been dismissed or terminated by the prosecution. On 31 August, the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council also published a report that assessed the performance of the prosecutorial system in handling cases in the past six years. The report served to confirm the findings of the Kosovo Law Institute that the majority of corruption and organized crime-related reports and investigations had been either dismissed or terminated.

31. Kosovo courts also issued judgments in several war crimes and related cases. In April, the Supreme Court returned for retrial the case against a prominent former Kosovo Liberation Army member accused of crimes allegedly committed in Suharekë/Suva Reka in June 1999. In the same month, the Basic Court of Pristina issued a guilty verdict against the former mayor of Skenderaj/Srbica in relation to his escape from detention on two occasions, in August and September 2015, while on



trial for war crimes against the civilian population. He was sentenced to a fine of 12,000 euros. On 22 June, the Basic Court of Prizren found a former member of the Yugoslav reserve police guilty of war crimes against the civilian population committed in the village of Krushë e Vogël/Mala Kruša in March 1999, namely, plunder and destruction of property, as well as desecration of corpses of an unknown number of unidentified persons, and sentenced him to 22 years of imprisonment.

32. At the end of June, the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor of Serbia announced the filing of an indictment against a Kosovo Albanian who had been arrested and detained in January 2020 in Belgrade in relation to crimes allegedly committed in the village of Rudicë/Rudice, municipality of Klinë/Klina in June and July 1999. The Higher Court in Belgrade subsequently returned the indictment and requested the War Crimes Prosecutor to conduct further investigations.

33. UNMIK continued to support efforts to determine the fate of 1,643 persons still missing since the Kosovo conflict. On 30 June, UNMIK provided equipment and technical support to the Belgrade-Pristina Working Group on persons who are unaccounted for in connection with events in Kosovo, in order to strengthen the Group's capacity to coordinate, exchange, and process information on missing persons. On 30 August, on the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, my Special Representative reaffirmed UNMIK support for work to establish the fate of missing persons in Kosovo. Access to this information is a fundamental human right and a crucial element of trust-building and reconciliation between communities.

34. UNMIK continued to closely monitor the evolving human rights implications of COVID-19 and measures to contain it, especially with regard to the disproportionate impact on non-majority communities and persons in vulnerable situations, such as women and girls, older persons, persons deprived of liberty and persons on the move. On 4 April, reacting to reports of media outlets disclosing the personal information of individuals in quarantine, the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo issued a statement in which it urged the media to adhere to the Constitution and legislation concerning the protection of personal data. My Special Representative called upon all institutions and stakeholders to remain vigilant to possible stigmatization and discrimination related to combating COVID-19 and for an inclusive response to ensure no one was left behind and to respect patients' right to privacy.

35. During the period under review, the preparatory team for the establishment of the Kosovo truth and reconciliation commission continued to hold public consultations with members of civil society, academia and local communities throughout Kosovo to discuss the functional modalities and jurisdiction of such a commission. On 8 June, UNMIK participated in a virtual meeting, during which the preparatory team briefed relevant stakeholders on the process of creating a draft normative act and on its substantive provisions.

36. Kosovo continued to prosecute individuals suspected of participation in foreign wars and terrorism. In June and July, the Special Department of the Basic Court of Pristina issued guilty verdicts in the cases against seven women, part of a group of individuals repatriated from the Syrian Arab Republic to Kosovo in April 2019 (see [S/2019/461](#)). The Court sentenced each woman to a two-year suspended sentence of imprisonment and mandatory psychological counselling. In addition, the Court of Appeals published judgments in the cases against three men from the same group, increasing the sentences imposed by the court of first instance for two of the individuals, while confirming the sentence imposed on the third.

37. Against the backdrop of reports that COVID-19 containment measures had increased instances of violence against children, the Law on Child Protection entered into force on 17 July. The new law provides protections for children from physical

and mental violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and other forms of violence that endanger their life, safety, health, education or development. The law, which places the best interests of the child first, is in line with international standards and principles of the Constitution.

## VIII. Women and peace and security

38. During the reporting period, the Kosovo government commission responsible for the verification and recognition of the status of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence received 63 applications, bringing the total number of applications received since its establishment, in February 2018, to 1,303. To date, 846 applicants (819 women and 27 men) have been granted survivor status, while 262 (224 women and 38 men) were rejected.

39. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic marked the beginning of a steady increase in cases of domestic and gender-based violence. From January to June 2020, Kosovo police reported 1,012 cases of domestic violence, compared with 785 during the same period in 2019, a 29 per cent increase. During the reporting period, the multi-stakeholder Security and Gender Group, which is chaired by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and includes UNMIK as a member, focused on assisting women and girls in overcoming the adverse impact of isolation measures, in particular risks of domestic and gender-based violence. In partnership with UN-Women, UNMIK supported domestic violence shelters throughout Kosovo with donations of bed linen and clothes, as well as equipment to support online schooling for children living in shelters. Moreover, an awareness-raising campaign consisting of televised spots empowering survivors to report domestic violence was launched, and informative visual materials on reporting cases of domestic violence were distributed. During the first months of the COVID-19 lockdown, the OSCE mission in Kosovo also launched a campaign against domestic violence in all official languages to inform the public of the services and support available to victims. The campaign was supported by the Kosovo Force, which aired radio messages in the Albanian and Serbian languages.

40. On 29 June, the mayor of Zubin Potok and the chief executive officer of the municipality of North Mitrovica inaugurated the first regional shelter for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence in northern Kosovo. The construction of the shelter was funded by UNMIK. On 2 July, the mayor of Gjakovë/Đakovica signed an agreement with the local women's shelter for victims of domestic violence to contribute 4,000 euros annually to the shelter for a period of three years.

41. As part of the COVID-19 response initiatives, the UNMIK-produced documentary "Not Your Property" was screened on a local television channel on 2 July, followed by a high-level discussion on the impact of COVID-19 on women, which reached more than 171,000 views on social media. In addition, 54 women and 6 men improved their livelihoods through an UNMIK-funded income-generating project involving the production of some 24,000 face masks distributed to vulnerable populations in five municipalities of Kosovo in July.

42. While the majority of school-aged children were able to complete the academic year through distance learning implemented by the Kosovo Ministry of Education, the lack of access to information technology equipment and Internet connectivity exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and affected the rights of some to education. Vulnerabilities of girls and boys from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, notably, have been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Most children from these communities, in particular girls and young women, do not have access to information technology equipment or the Internet. Coupled with increased domestic care duties at

home, young women and girls are at risk of losing their academic year and of, ultimately, dropping out of school.

## **IX. Trust-building, partnerships and cooperation**

42. During the reporting period, the Mission's confidence-building projects were adapted to support the people of Kosovo in combating the pandemic and meeting emergency needs, while ensuring that they contributed to their overall inter-community trust-building objectives. The Kosovo Trust-building Platform, which was launched online on 17 March, provides public health information in local languages, while continuing to track and share information on efforts by grassroots and civil society actors, international organizations and Kosovo central and local institutions to further the recommendations of the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum held in Ljubljana in May 2018. In June, UNMIK, in cooperation with IOM, completed the second phase of a trust-building initiative aimed at promoting the learning of both official languages, expanding the contents of the online Albanian-Serbian and Serbian-Albanian dictionaries, and supporting Kosovo institutions in disseminating information on COVID-19 in both official languages, as well as producing online COVID-19-related content. The UNMIK-sponsored townhall debate series on trust-building was also adapted to address issues and concerns related to COVID-19 through online means. The debates, interviews with medical experts and articles published during the reporting period had a combined 1,971,000 views across Kosovo social media platforms.

43. As a result of COVID-19 containment measures imposed in mid-March, the Mission modified its support for the pilot drop-in centre for street children and their families in Kosovo in order to enable the conduct of online classrooms and the provision of psychosocial support and counselling. In addition, food and hygienic packages were distributed to 25 homeless families, including 52 adults and 131 children. In consultation with the United Nations Kosovo team, those activities complemented United Nations Children's Fund initiatives focused on continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women, children and vulnerable communities, as well as continuous education, social protection and child protection support.

44. UNMIK continued to provide support for the integration of the judiciary and the administration of justice, in line with the recommendations of the United Nations Kosovo Trust-Building Forum, with a focus on the needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. UNMIK, in partnership with the local non-governmental organization (NGO), Advocacy Centre for Democratic Culture, continued to support the Basic Court of Mitrovica in the translation of case files to reduce the backlog of cases. It also supported the integration of young Kosovo Serb lawyers into the Kosovo legal system through targeted training on the Kosovo bar exam and on the judiciary and legal practice. With programmatic funds provided by UNMIK, the United Nations Development Programme assisted the Basic Courts of Pristina, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane and the Supreme Court in the translation of case files and provided a five-week training to 30 court interpreters in legal translation skills. On 25 June, the President of the Basic Court of Mitrovica inaugurated its new courtroom, which was fully furnished and equipped by UNMIK.

45. The UNMIK-supported Legal Aid Centre of the Kosovo Law Institute provided free legal aid to 611 individuals (207 women and 404 men) on issues related to property rights, labour and pensioner rights, and domestic violence. During May, as part of an UNMIK-funded project, the local NGO, Initiative for Justice and Equality, organized a series of online training on domestic violence, protection orders, joint

property division and financial maintenance for police and justice system personnel. It also published a series of articles on legal literacy and video materials on victims' rights and legal counselling to survivors of domestic violence.

46. On 31 March, with support from UNMIK, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training completed a joint regional project to support capacity-building on financial investigations in South-Eastern Europe that had begun in 2017. During the final stage of the project, the more than 100 representatives from Kosovo law enforcement and the judiciary who had participated in the training developed a curriculum on financial investigations tailored to the Kosovo legal framework. The project increased Kosovo's capacity to combat money laundering and terrorism financing and promoted strengthened cooperation among law enforcement agencies in the region.

47. UNMIK continued to bolster its engagement with human rights-focused civil society organizations to help to facilitate cross-community dialogue and encourage grassroots monitoring of human rights violations and other human rights-related concerns. UNMIK supported several local human rights civil society organizations in drafting their first joint report on the human rights situation in Kosovo, which was published on 30 June. The report, which fills an existing gap in human rights monitoring and reporting in Kosovo, was produced at the end of a participatory process that brought together representatives of civil society organizations from different ethnic backgrounds, in line with the Mission's trust-building efforts.

48. UNMIK continued its work in support of the youth, peace and security agenda, including in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. From March to June, UNMIK organized 10 online discussions with youth and local representatives from 10 ethnically mixed municipalities, which resulted in several joint activities, including the distribution of personal protective equipment and the inclusion of youth councils into municipal emergency task forces in the municipalities of Vushtri/Vučitrn, Lipjan/Lipljan, Rahovec/Orahovac and Istog/Istok. As a follow-up to those municipal meetings, in July and August, UNMIK supported youth cyclist volunteers in delivering more than 1,300 reusable masks to more than 500 vulnerable families, including from non-majority communities, and 2,100 posters with COVID-19 awareness-raising information, in the municipalities of Lipjan/Lipljan, Prizren, Kaçanik/Kaçanik and Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje. Similar actions are planned in other municipalities of Kosovo. UNMIK also supported the Mitrovica Innovation Centre, the Gračanica/Gračanicë Innovation Centre and the Klokot/Klllokot Multi-Ethnic Youth Centre by procuring desktop 3-D printers and filaments to produce protective face shields. Between May and June, more than 900 face protective shields were produced and delivered to local medical staff and frontline health-care professionals. Furthermore, the UNMIK-supported Youth Centre for Cultural Diversity and Minority Development in Klokot/Klllokot conducted weekly online workshops on mental health, digital media literacy and countering disinformation and online hate speech. Those workshops complemented the UNMIK-supported online awareness-raising campaign by the United Youth Task Force, reaching more than 12,000 young people.

49. On 7 August, UNMIK presented its work on inter-ethnic youth cooperation at an event organized by the United Nations Kosovo team and the Young Men's Christian Association Kosovo within the framework of the UN75 campaign. In the wake of the adoption of Security Council resolution [2535 \(2020\)](#) on youth, peace and security, on 27 August, UNMIK, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq organized the first joint online youth platform to share experiences and ideas of Kosovo, Iraqi and Colombian youth in building peace and combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Kosovo youth were joined by young peacebuilders from Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq and Mexico and discussed

youth participation in peace processes and decision-making, challenges related to engaging young women in trust-building initiatives, the relevance of youth work for reconciliation and building collective memory, and the importance of cultural and other activities to help to bridge community divides. On 9 September, UNMIK, together with youth representatives from Kosovo, also presented its youth trust-building achievements at an Arria formula meeting on implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda by United Nations peace operations.

50. During the reporting period, UNMIK facilitated the issuance of 26 Red Notices and 7 extradition requests to Kosovo from members of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). It opened 608 cases for investigation within the INTERPOL database. UNMIK also processed 4,806 items of INTERPOL official correspondence. In addition, in July, the Kosovo government signed a “working arrangement” document with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation on cooperation in combating organized crime, corruption and other forms of serious crime.

## **X. Observations**

51. I express my deep solidarity with the people of Kosovo during these difficult times caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. I am pleased that both UNMIK and the United Nations Kosovo team are in a position to support the efforts of Kosovo institutions to contain the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate the socioeconomic effects of the health crisis, in particular on the most vulnerable members of the population. I welcome the commitments of the Kosovo leadership to combating the pandemic and advancing the dialogue with Belgrade and on European integration. I also call upon the new government of Kosovo to continue to strengthen the rule of law, support accountability processes for serious violations of human rights, take resolute steps to combat corruption and impunity, and implement human rights frameworks, including by ensuring a human-rights based approach to the COVID-19 response and recovery.

52. I am concerned by the political polarization that persists in Pristina and that has had an impact on the management of the pandemic. I call upon all political entities in Kosovo to unite around the priorities of safeguarding public health and supporting public institutions in ensuring a coherent and effective response to curb the pandemic and associated public health and socioeconomic challenges.

53. The increase in reported cases of domestic violence since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic is disturbing. I encourage Kosovo institutions to strengthen their efforts to enforce legal and other protections and address the inequalities experienced by women. The government should continue efforts to assist survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including by ensuring victim-centred and inclusive support.

54. I welcome that UNMIK and its partners adapted their trust-building programmatic activities to support the management of the pandemic and to meet the emergency needs of Kosovo. The creative use of strategic communications tools, such as the online multilingual Kosovo Trust-building Platform and the town hall debates, contributed to ensuring the dissemination of critical public health information to communities throughout Kosovo. UNMIK and the United Nations Kosovo team will continue to adapt their operations to the changed environment and prioritize support for Kosovo, especially the most vulnerable.

55. I welcome the resumption, after a prolonged suspension, of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The renewed commitment

towards the normalization of relations is evident, and I hope that it will remain so until a comprehensive solution is found. I am encouraged by the constructive participation of both parties in the initial phase of negotiations facilitated by the European Union Special Representative, and the continued personal engagement of the European Union High Representative. The parties should build on the progress achieved to date in the discussions, including in follow-up to the agreements signed by the parties under the auspices of the United States related to “economic normalization”. I hope the continuing discussions will help to clarify the fate of the remaining missing persons and that progress can be achieved on the return of displaced persons and economic cooperation and implementing other outstanding agreements.

56. I call upon the leadership in Belgrade and Pristina to demonstrate flexibility and creativity to overcome differences. I urge political leaders to ensure an inclusive approach through greater participation of key stakeholders, in particular women and young people, in the consultation and decision-making processes and the inclusion of gender and youth perspectives in the implementation of agreements that affect the lives of the population.

57. I am concerned about renewed tensions over construction activities in the special protective zone around the Visoki Dečani monastery, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage site. While the works have been suspended, a clear commitment by the Kosovo authorities to respect legislation, including the ruling of the Constitutional Court upholding the property rights of the Serbian Orthodox Church, will be important for preserving inter-community trust.

58. I reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to supporting the Ashkali, Egyptian and Roma communities affected by lead poisoning in Kosovo. Regrettably, there have been no further contributions to the United Nations trust fund established to support targeted projects for the benefit of these communities. I renew my appeal for voluntary contributions from Member States and other actors and organizations to enable an effective response to meet the needs of those vulnerable communities.

59. During the reporting period, the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office made progress in furthering its investigations. I call upon all relevant parties, Kosovo institutions and international actors to extend their full support and cooperation for these efforts, which are essential for the peaceful future of Kosovo.

60. I thank my Special Representative, Zahir Tanin, for his leadership during this difficult period and all Mission staff for their dedicated support for Kosovo, including to meet the challenges of the pandemic. I reiterate my gratitude to the United Nations Development Coordinator and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes for their valuable collaboration with UNMIK, and to longstanding partners of the United Nations in Kosovo, including the Kosovo Force, the European Union and OSCE.

## Annex I

### **Report of the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the Secretary-General on the activities of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo from 16 March to 15 September 2020**

#### **1. Summary**

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic overshadowed the reporting period. Notwithstanding the extraordinary situation, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo continued to carry out its mandate, albeit with a reduced physical presence. The President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, agreed through an exchange of letters to a one-year technical extension of the Mission's 2018–2020 mandate owing to the pandemic. The Mission, meanwhile, resumed all its mandated tasks.

Following the decision of the Kosovo Judicial Council to lift its pandemic-related restrictions and to allow court sessions to recommence, the Mission resumed its case monitoring activities. Those restrictions permitted only a few urgent hearings to be held. The Mission's Case Monitoring Unit conducted a review of the trials being held that might have to recommence because no hearings were held for three consecutive months.

The Case Monitoring Unit also participated in several working groups of the functional review of the rule of law sector led by the Ministry of Justice, a process aimed at reforms in the justice system (including vetting), and in a working group on finalizing the revised Criminal Procedure Code.

Furthermore, the Mission contributed to drafting the new Kosovo Correctional Service Law by taking part, at the expert level, in relevant working groups.

In support of the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, the Mission continued to facilitate the implementation of the IBM Technical Protocol and the dialogue agreements related to freedom of movement and the judiciary. In this regard, the Mission participated in the working group that is drafting the new national IBM strategy.

The fate of the missing persons continued to draw attention during the reporting period, and the positive role of the Mission in identifying remains of missing persons was highlighted in a number of domestic and international media reports.

In May, the Mission launched the "Speak Up on Time" media campaign, highlighting the importance of preserving biological evidence in cases of sexual violence. This is part of an ongoing awareness-raising campaign, which the Mission and the Institute of Forensic Medicine launched in 2019.

The Mission continued to support the Kosovo police in the field of international police cooperation at different levels. The Mission also maintained its rapid intervention capacities as second security responder and continued its support for the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. Through the Institute of Forensic Medicine, the Mission supported its local counterparts in locating and identifying missing persons.

## **2. Activities of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo**

### **2.1. Monitoring**

Following the decision of the Kosovo Judicial Council to lift its restrictions related to the pandemic and to allow court sessions to recommence, the Mission resumed its case-monitoring activities. The Case Monitoring Unit attended the trial sessions of all the cases that it was monitoring as relevant, while continuing to follow and analyse the procedural developments of existing and newly monitored cases. The Council has banned both the public and the media from attending court sessions but has specifically allowed the Mission to monitor all sessions in line with the Mission's robust monitoring mandate.

As a consequence of the imposed COVID-19 measures throughout the reporting period, only some urgent hearings were held. The Mission conducted a review of the trials being held that may have to recommence because hearings were not held for three consecutive months. This measure is stipulated in the Kosovo Criminal Procedure Code and has affected a considerable number of trials, including high-profile cases. To date, the parties agreed in most cases being monitored by the Mission to consider previous testimonies as read, thus avoiding the re-administration of evidence in 10 cases. While such agreements enable the continuation of adjudication, they may risk being legally challenged because it is clearly required under the Code that, in such cases, all evidence should be examined again. The Mission advocated a legal opinion on the matter by the Supreme Court. Of 40 cases being monitored by the Mission, to date, in 10, testimonies were considered as read, while, for all others, it remained to be seen whether that would happen so as to avoid the re-administration of evidence, which would further delay justice. Furthermore, in one case, the judge scheduled the hearing just within the deadline and, in another case, the defence lawyers objected to considering all testimonies as read. The Mission will closely monitor the outcome of all these cases, 21 of which are considered high-profile ones. In 10 cases, hearings were adjourned because the courts could not guarantee the observance of pandemic-related measures in the court rooms.

In addition, the Mission looked into cases that were likely to reach the period of statutory limitations as a result of hearings having been halted. Meanwhile, the Mission cooperated closely with the European Union Office in Kosovo/European Union Special Representative in Kosovo to urge the Kosovo Judicial Council to act on the cases that would possibly need to recommence.

The Mission repeatedly expressed concern at the high rate of cases being sent back for retrial by the Court of Appeals, a practice that should be relied on only in limited and well-grounded circumstances.

Following the Mission's advocacy, the Kosovo Judicial Council appointed two Kosovo Serb judges to the Court of Appeals Division in Mitrovica. With those appointments, effective as from 1 July, the Division now has four Kosovo Serb and three Kosovo Albanian judges, as prescribed under the justice agreement signed between the parties within the framework of the European Union-facilitated dialogue.

Justice monitors with the Mission participated in the online conference organized by the Mitrovica-based non-governmental organization Aktiv on the draft proposal for amendments to the Law on the Use of Languages, providing comments and advice.

The Mission participated in several working groups dealing with rule of law reforms. A Mission expert took part in the introductory online meeting of the functional review of the rule of law sector sub-working group on the judiciary chaired by the Ministry of Justice. The group will focus on improving accountability,



professionalism, competence and integrity in the judicial and prosecutorial systems (including vetting) as part of a comprehensive process leading to the finalization of an overall strategy on the rule of law sector. The Mission also participated in the sub-working group on criminal justice, which focuses on the efforts to combat organized crime and high-level corruption. Moreover, a Mission expert took part in the online meeting of the sub-working group on anti-corruption focusing on the policy measures for reforming the anti-corruption institutional framework and increasing police-prosecution synergies, such as the establishment of the National Bureau for Combating High-Level Corruption and Anti-Corruption Courts.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice invited the Mission to take part in two additional working groups. One working group is aimed at addressing accountability, while the goal of the other working group is to finalize the revised Criminal Procedure Code. The new Minister of Justice's proposal on the vetting process caused several experts from civil society to resign from the working group, which had been established by the previous government. The new government also suspended previous decisions aimed at curtailing nepotism or irregularities in the appointment of diplomats in foreign institutions.

The Mission has continued to advocate the need for relevant legislation, or a regulation, that allows courts to hold online trial sessions to prevent legal deadlines from elapsing. According to European Union best practices, judicial authorities in many European Union member States have passed or amended laws that allow hearings to take place online.

In February 2020, all Basic Courts in Kosovo began to use an automatic case assignment system. However, the Basic Court Presidents manually reassigned cases that had already been automatically assigned to judges under the system. Mission experts took part in discussions to address the issue, and, together with several other stakeholders, including the European Union Office in Kosovo, disagreed with the proposed practice of manual reassignment of cases, given that it provided room for interference in the allocation of cases.

The Kosovo Law Institute issued a report titled "Justice in the Eyes of Citizens". The report is the phase 1 outcome of the Mission-funded project, "Building trust in the judicial system and enhancing realisation of human rights through lay trial monitoring". The project was implemented by the Institute from October 2019 to March 2020. Eighteen non-expert (lay) monitors, selected from a diverse range of ages, genders, ethnicities and regions, monitored 360 criminal trial sessions throughout Kosovo. They evaluated criminal hearings on human rights and procedural fairness issues, including equality before the law, transparency and impartiality of the courts, and fair trial rights. The institute analysed the feedback from the lay monitors and drafted the assessment report.

Mission experts actively participated in a videoconference with the European Commission for Democracy through Law, also attended by staff of the Office of the European Union Special Representative in Kosovo and representatives of the embassies of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The Commission issued an opinion on certain provisions of the Draft Criminal Procedure Code, namely, on trial in absentia and suspension of officials from office, which reflected the comments and proposals suggested by the Mission.

Through regular monitoring, the Mission concluded that all Kosovo correctional facilities were applying adequate protective anti-COVID-19 measures for both staff and inmates.

The Mission donated information technology equipment to the Kosovo Correctional Service to allow inmates to communicate with family members and facilitate contacts among staff.

The Mission participated in a working group preparing the draft legislation on the Kosovo Correctional Service. The Mission presented several recommendations on the revised draft, including on the need to enhance transparency in the work of the Service.

The Mission continued to monitor the situation at the common crossing points between Serbia and Kosovo following the lifting of the tariffs on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and produced an analytical overview of imports of goods, commercial freight traffic and drivers exiting Kosovo to Serbia.

The Mission facilitated requests for information between Kosovo and Serbian customs in line with the IBM Technical Protocol mechanism on the exchange of information, which is part of the agreements reached within the European Union-facilitated dialogue. The Mission will continue to monitor and assist to ensure that the exchange of information mechanism is back on track.

The Mission participated in the working group for the drafting of the new national IBM strategy. The Mission had repeatedly advocated that the strategy be a standalone document with a single dedicated budget, which the government finally accepted.

Mission experts participated in the working group on the introduction of measures and procedures involving advance passenger information and passenger name records at Pristina International Airport. The resulting administrative instruction has now been approved by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This is an important development, bringing Kosovo in line with European Union guidelines for combating irregular immigration and improving border control.

The Mission continued regular face-to-face meetings or phone calls with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Civil Registration Agency. The Mission's Dialogue Support Unit's experts on the IBM, Freedom of Movement and Justice Agreements participated in a two-day seminar chaired by European Union Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and other Western Balkans regional issues, Miroslav Lajčák. The Unit provided short briefings on each of the relevant European Union-facilitated dialogue agreements, focusing on achievements in terms of implementation and on challenges ahead.

The Mission continued to support the Mitrovica Basic Court and the Court of Appeals Division in Mitrovica in the implementation of the European Union-facilitated justice agreement.

## **2.2. Operations**

On 27 July, Kosovo and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation signed a working arrangement increasing cooperation between Kosovo law enforcement agencies and the Agency. Meanwhile, the Mission has continued to facilitate accurate and timely information exchange between the Agency and the Kosovo police on serious crime investigations through its Swedish liaison desk.

The Mission's formed police unit, as the second security responder in Kosovo, served as a support to the regional police directorates in Mitrovica South and Mitrovica North during the protests held by Vetëvendosje. The Mission also assisted Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) operations during the collection of votes in Kosovo for the Serbian elections held on 21 June through the presence of a Mission liaison officer at the OSCE operations centre. That was also an

excellent opportunity to review and rehearse joint procedures and activities with the Kosovo police and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Kosovo Force.

The Mission supported the Kosovo Institute of Forensic Medicine in exhuming body remains from graves in the municipalities of Pejë/Peć and Mitrovica, in which complete remains of potential conflict-related victims were recovered.

The project “Evidence preservation on sexual violence”, in particular the campaign “Speak up on time”, was supported by the Mission and implemented by the Institute of Forensic Medicine, in cooperation with the Kosovo police. Some 800 students attended the lectures given by a team composed of two local experts from the Institute and one member of the Kosovo police.

## Annex II

### **Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office**

On 12 March 2020, the Government of the Netherlands declared the implementation of national measures to enhance public safety in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Overnight, the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office activated a business continuity plan, in which the majority of staff made the transition to telecommuting. The remote work arrangements have remained in place since then, with only a very limited team at the premises.

Notwithstanding the special measures in place due to the pandemic, the work of the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office has continued uninterrupted and even intensified.

The Specialist Chambers detention facility is fully operational. On 16 March, it became fully staffed, and all necessary training of staff and technical preparations were concluded by 1 April.

On 17 March, the call for nominations of judges for appointment to the roster of international judges closed. The independent selection panel that was appointed has concluded the selection process and submitted its report to the appointing authority.

On 23 April, the Specialist Prosecutor notified the President of the Specialist Chambers of his intent to initiate proceedings before the Specialist Chambers. In accordance with the Law on the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office, the President assigned a pre-trial judge to review the indictment filed by the Specialist Prosecutor. The pre-trial judge has up to six months to decide whether to confirm the indictment.

On 29 and 30 April, the Specialist Chambers judges conducted their annual plenary by videoconference. During the plenary, the judges elected a new Vice-President and adopted 30 amendments to the Specialist Chambers rules of procedure and evidence (rules).

On 26 May, the Specialist Chamber of the Constitutional Court issued its judgment, finding that all 30 adopted rule amendments complied with chapter II of the Constitution. The adopted amendments therefore entered into force.

The outreach activities carried out by the Specialist Chambers have continued and quickly moved online in view of the pandemic. Nine outreach events were held during the reporting period. Six of those events were with students in Kosovo and three with Albanian- and Serbian-speaking journalists. The Specialist Chambers is also engaging with its Court Information Network and, on 26 March, hosted an online meeting to receive feedback on newly produced video clips and outreach activities planned for the coming months. In the same month, the Specialist Chambers Registrar signed a grant agreement with the Government of Switzerland concerning outreach activities planned by the Specialist Chambers for 2020 and 2021. The visitors' programme of the Specialist Chambers also moved online and continues to welcome groups to learn about the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office.

The number of media queries received by the Specialist Chambers increased with the filings by the Specialist Prosecutor in February and in April, as well as with queries about the impact that the pandemic may have on Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office operations. During the reporting period, accurate media reporting increased. This is particularly important in order to reassure victims, witnesses and others affected that the operations continue without interruption.

The Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office moved from the third budgetary period into the fourth when the budget for the period from 15 June 2020 to 14 June 2021 received final approval by the European Council on 11 June 2020.

On 24 June, an updated list of Specialist Counsel eligible to practise before the Specialist Chambers was published. The current list contains 179 Specialist Counsel, of whom 89 are qualified to represent victims. The application process remains open.

The President, Registrar and Specialist Prosecutor continued their engagement with the host State, European Union member States, contributing States and others. On 9 July, the Principals hosted an online briefing for the ambassadors of the European Union member States and contributing third States in The Hague. Twenty-seven States participated in the briefing, during which they were updated by the Principals on the most recent developments and participants posed questions.

On 3 September, the legal aid regulations were adopted by the Specialist Chambers Registrar, following consultations with the President of the Specialist Chambers, and were published online. The regulations exemplify best practices in legal aid standards, guaranteeing compliance with the fair trial principles enshrined in the Constitution and the Law on the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office, while ensuring the sound financial management of the legal aid scheme's resources. The regulations set out the process for suspects or accused before the Specialist Chambers to receive legal aid, in full or in part, if they have demonstrated that they cannot afford to pay for their defence or do not receive legal aid through other means.

The COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office continued to implement its mandate. On 24 June, it issued a statement announcing that it had filed a 10-count indictment in April with the Specialist Chambers for the court's consideration, charging Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli and others with a range of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, enforced disappearance of persons, persecution and torture. The Specialist Prosecutor deemed it necessary to issue the public notice of charges because of repeated efforts by Mr. Thaçi and Mr. Veseli to obstruct and undermine the work of the Specialist Chambers. During the reporting period, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office continued to interview suspects, victims and witnesses, as well as collect and review other evidence. In order to fulfil its mandate, it continues to require the engagement and support of the international community, international organizations and individual States.

## Annex III

**Composition and strength of the police component of the United Nations  
Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo**

(as at 15 September 2020)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Total</i>
Germany	–	1	1
Hungary	–	1	1
Russian Federation	1	1	2
Turkey	–	1	1
Ukraine	–	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

**Composition and strength of the military liaison component of the  
United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo**

(as at 15 September 2020)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Total</i>
Czechia	–	2	2
Poland	–	1	1
Republic of Moldova	–	1	1
Romania	–	1	1
Turkey	–	1	1
Ukraine	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>

