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Statement by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, in the Security Council, July 25, 2008

Mr. President,

I would like to welcome Mr. Lamberto Zannier, the Secretary-General's new Special Representative in Kosovo. Mr. Zannier is well qualified to assume this role and the United States is confident in his ability to consolidate UNMIK's considerable achievements in preserving peace and stability in Kosovo.

Mr. Zannier your role is different than your predecessors. Your task is more limited to implement the reconfiguration of UNMIK in accordance with the order of the Secretary-General, rather than to administer Kosovo. Facilitating reconfiguration is a different but significant mission. Listening to your briefing, I understand that you appreciate this vital change. You and your staff have the support of the United States as you work to implement the Secretary-General's plans to reconfigure UNMIK.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank former Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Reucker and his deputy Larry Rossin for their hard work and significant achievements during their tenure.

I would also like to welcome Foreign Minister Jeremic here today and congratulate Serbia on demonstrating its commitment to rule of law through the arrest of Radovan Karadzic. We are also pleased with the tone of the minister here today. The new Serbian government is making commendable efforts to improve relations with the European Union. We encourage Serbia to further illustrate these gestures by engaging constructively with the European Union on Kosovo.

I would like also to welcome Foreign Minister Hyseni to the Council and congratulate him on his appointment as Kosovo's first Foreign Minister and on the progress his government is making as it charts its new independent course.

Mr. President today, I would like to make three additional points.

First, this is a time of promise for all the people of Kosovo. The July 11 donors' conference that the Foreign Minister of Kosovo referred to in Brussels exceeded expectations with pledges totaling 1.9 billion dollars. The Conference underscored the commitment of key members of the international community to help foster economic growth, support regional stability, and encourage prosperity for all the people of Kosovo. I am pleased to note that, since Kosovo's declaration of independence on February 17, a constitution and 41 laws have been passed with strong commitment to protection of minority community rights as well as religious and cultural heritage in line with the recommendations of former UN Special Envoy Mr. Ahtisaari. Furthermore, three minorities including two ethnic Serbs

continue to serve as ministers in Kosovo's government; ethnic Serbs are active in several of Kosovo's local and central government institutions; 43 countries have recognized Kosovo's independence; and Kosovo has applied for membership in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The government of Kosovo and the vast majority of Kosovo's citizens -- from all ethnic groups -- have shown goodwill and restraint, despite continued provocations by hard-line opponents of Kosovo's independence. The progress and stability in Kosovo has been laudable and should be commended by all members of the Security Council.

Second, despite this progress, we share the Secretary-General's concern regarding the continuing lack of control on the Serbia-Kosovo border. Smuggling remains rampant, and the threat of violence from hardliners remains worrisome. We call on Serbia to support all authorities in their efforts to restore legitimate customs and other normal border functions.

The threat of violence against those who would seek to impose order must cease. We deplore ongoing efforts by hardliners in Serbia using financial levers and physical intimidation to coerce ethnic Kosovo Serbs not to participate in Kosovo institutions.

We expect that the new government in Belgrade to halt the destabilizing policies of the past and to support legitimate efforts at building reconciliation and stability.

We also share the Secretary-General's concern about the property dispute at the Decan Monastery. This issue highlights an important principle as the Government of Kosovo and the international community work to ensure that minority cultural and religious rights are respected. The International Civilian Representative will exercise oversight to ensure that the Government of Kosovo meets its obligations to protect the rights of minority communities and their cultural and religious heritage.

Third, as this Council has remained deadlocked and unable to provide guidance to the Secretary-General regarding UNMIK's future, we welcome and fully support the Secretary-General's announced decision to reconfigure UNMIK in the light of new realities on the ground in Kosovo, particularly as Kosovo's new constitution has come into force. This decision by the Secretary-General is completely in line with his existing authorities under resolution 1244. We look forward to quick progress on UNMIK's reconfiguration and its carrying out of the residual functions as the Secretary-General has previously outlined. As we have consistently held since a broad international coalition moved to implement the plan of former Special Envoy Ahtisaari, UNMIK must adapt to the new reality of Kosovo's independence and the establishment of the International Civilian Office and the EU's Rule of Law Mission, EULEX.

Specifically, we welcome and fully support the decision by the Secretary-General to authorize transfer of responsibilities regarding rule-of-law from UNMIK to EULEX. EULEX will play a critical role in supporting the development and enforcement of rule of law throughout Kosovo. It is for that reason that the United States will contribute police and judicial personnel to the EU-led mission. We look forward to EULEX's early deployment throughout Kosovo and encourage the UN and the EU to conclude technical negotiations that would allow for full EULEX deployment as soon as possible. All parties must recognize that the deployment of EULEX throughout Kosovo will help ensure stability for all ethnicities in Kosovo.

This Council can contribute to the preservation of UNMIK's tremendous legacy of having preserved peace and stability in Kosovo since its establishment in 1999. We call on all Council members to support the Secretary-General as he exercises authority under resolution 1244 to guide UNMIK as it makes a key transition in Kosovo. We also ask that Council Members support the members of the

International Steering Group and the EU as they work to take on the responsibility of international supervision of Kosovo, and by extension the preservation of UNMIK's positive legacy.

Thank you Mr. President.