

Kosovo Verification Mission (Closed)

The Kosovo Verification Mission was established by the Permanent Council in October 1998 and was dissolved in June 1999.

1. Basic decisions

Establishment: 193rd Plenary Meeting of the Permanent Council, 25 October 1998, (PC.DEC/263).

Interpretative Statement under paragraph 79 (Chapter 6) of the Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations.

Terms of Reference:

- *ibid*;
- 156th Plenary Meeting of the Permanent Council Decision No. 218, 11 March 1998 (PC.DEC/218)
- Statement of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE of 7 October 1998
- Agreement on the OSCE Kosovo Verification Missions signed in Belgrade, on 16 October 1998, by the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE and the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (CIO.GAL/65/98/Corr.1)
- Permanent Council Decision No. 259, 15 October 1998 (PC.DEC/259/98)
- Agreement between NATO and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 15 October 1998
- United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998) and 1203 (1998) (CIO.GAL/68/98)

2. Tasks

In its Decision No. 259 of 15 October 1998 the Permanent Council, acting within the framework of the United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1199, declared the preparedness of the OSCE to embark upon verification activities related to compliance of all parties in Kosovo with the requirements set forth by the international community with regard to the solution of the crisis in Kosovo. The Permanent Council supported the Chairman-in-Office's efforts to arrange with the FRY authorities for the OSCE to give its contribution to the peaceful solution of the crisis in Kosovo.

In its Decision No. 263 of 25 October 1998, the Permanent Council decided to establish the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) in accordance with the mandate contained in the agreement signed by the CiO (CIO.GAL/65/98).

The Agreement on the Kosovo Verification Mission signed by the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE and the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in part II General Responsibilities, Roles and Missions, enumerates the following tasks:

- to verify compliance by all parties in Kosovo with UN Security Council Resolution 1199, and to report instances of progress and/or non-compliance to the OSCE Permanent Council, the United Nations Security Council and other organisations. These reports will also be provided to the authorities of the FRY;
- to maintain close liaison with FRY, Serbian and, as appropriate, other Kosovo authorities, political parties and other organisations in Kosovo and accredited international and non-government organisations to assist in fulfilling its responsibilities;
- to supervise elections in Kosovo to ensure their openness and fairness in accordance with regulations and procedures to be agreed;
- to report and make recommendations to the OSCE Permanent Council, the UN Security Council and other organizations on areas covered by UN Security Council Resolution 1199.

These general responsibilities are further specified in Chapter III of the Agreement under Specific Terms of Reference entrusting the Kosovo Verification Mission with the following tasks:

- (...) verify the maintenance of the cease-fire by all elements. (...) investigate reports of cease-fire violations;
- (...) receive weekly information from relevant FRY/Serbian military/police headquarters in Kosovo regarding movements of forces (...). Upon request of the Verification Mission Director, Mission personnel may be invited to accompany police within Kosovo;
- (...) look for and report on roadblocks and other emplacements which influence lines of communications erected for purposes other than traffic or crime control;
- maintain liaison with FRY authorities about border control activity and movement units with border control responsibilities (...). The Verification Mission, when invited by the FRY authorities or upon its request, will visit border control units and accompany them as they perform their normal border control roles;
- when invited or upon request, the Verification Mission will accompany police units in Kosovo as they perform their normal policing roles;
- assist UNHCR, ICRC and other international organizations in facilitating the return of displaced persons to their homes (...). The Mission will verify the level of co-operation and support provided by the FRY and its entities to the humanitarian organizations and accredited NGOs (...);
- As the political settlement defining Kosovo's self-government is achieved and implementation begins, the Mission Director will assist, both with his own resources and with augmented OSCE implementation support, in areas such as elections supervision, assistance in the establishment of Kosovo institutions and police force development in Kosovo;

- The Mission Director will receive periodic updates from the relevant authorities concerning eventual allegations of abusive actions by military or police personnel and status of disciplinary or legal actions against individuals implicated in such abuses;
- (...) maintain liaison with FRY, Serbian and, as appropriate, Kosovo authorities and with ICRC regarding ICRC access to detained persons;
- (...) convene representatives of national communities and authorities to exchange information and provide guidance on implementation of the agreement establishing the Verification Mission;
- (...) report instances of progress and/or non-compliance or lack of full co-operation from any side to the OSCE and other organizations.

3. Deployment

The OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) reached a strength of approximately 1,500 international staff by February 1999 but was unable to carry out the full scope of the tasks allocated under the FRY-OSCE Agreement. The security situation in Kosovo during this period was characterized as tense.

Following a steady deterioration in the security situation in the Province, the OSCE CiO, Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek withdrew the KVM on 20 March 1999. The KVM was then temporarily based in Skopje, the capital of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The bulk of its Mission members were repatriated. The Mission was temporarily organised as a Mission "Core", responsible for administration and planning for the re-entry of an OSCE Mission to Kosovo; a Task Force in Albania to assist UNHCR with the refugee crisis and to conduct human rights investigations; and a further Task Force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia performing similar functions.

The KVM was later dissolved and the Task Force for Kosovo created in its stead by PC.DEC/296 on 8 June 1999, primarily tasked with preparing for re-deployment to Kosovo and continuing to assist the UN and other international organizations. The Task Force for Kosovo was dissolved on 1 July 1999 and replaced by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo by PC.DEC/305.

4. Duration

In its Decision No. 263, paragraph 3, the Permanent Council decided to establish the KVM for one year, with extensions upon the request of either the OSCE Chairman-in-Office or the FRY government. The Delegation of the Russian Federation formulated an interpretative statement to paragraph 3 of the Decision, attached to the Decision. The KVM was dissolved and the Task Force for Kosovo created in its stead by PC.DEC/296 on 8 June 1999.

5. Composition

The Agreement of 16 October 1998 foresaw in part IV the following structure for the Kosovo Verification Mission:

- A Director, together with headquarters staff to be determined by Verification Mission requirements.
- 2,000 unarmed verifiers from OSCE member states will be permitted. Headquarters and support staff included in this total. The Mission may be augmented with technical experts provided by OSCE.

- A headquarters in Pristina.
- Field presence in locations around Kosovo to be determined by the Mission Director.
- A small liaison office in Belgrade.

Part V of the Agreement Field Presence established the following provisions:

- Co-ordination Centres will be established in the capital of each opstina in Kosovo with specific areas of responsibility, under the Mission Director located in Pristina.
- Many opstina co-ordination centres will have one or more sub-stations in smaller towns/villages in the opstina. The number and location of sub-stations will vary from opstina to opstina, depending on the verification environment and past conflict situation.

As described above the composition of the KVM subsequently evolved during the Spring and early Summer of 1999 into those now found in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo within the UNMiK structure.