

## - Direct Talks Begin Today

Contributed by News Desk  
Friday, 28 September 2007  
Last Updated Friday, 28 September 2007

28 September, 2007 &ndash; New York &ndash; Representatives of Serbia and Kosovo will hold their first direct meeting today at the United Nations in New York. The topic of this meeting is the future of the breakaway province of Kosovo.

Six major powers involved in negotiating the ongoing dispute between the two sides are considering these talks to be the last attempt before an imposed solution is recommended if no agreement is reached by December 10 of this year.

Ahead of Friday's talks, Serbian President Boris Tadic warned the UN General Assembly in New York of unforeseeable consequences if Kosovo declared independence unilaterally.

He warned that if there was a one-sided recognition of that independence, it would set a precedent, with separatist movements everywhere seizing on it.

Serbia has offered something that they call &ldquo;95% autonomy&rdquo; where Serbia would &ldquo;allow&rdquo; Kosovo to control its finances and internal affairs, but Serbia would be in charge of the borders and external affairs.

Kosovo Albanian side has made clear it will accept nothing short of independence under UN supervision at the end of the negotiating process on 10 December. They claim that any attempts to include Kosovo within Serbia&rsquo;s borders would set only set the precedent of legitimizing and not punishing state terror in other areas of the world.

Kosovo's quest for independence has the backing of the US and most of the EU, except Spain that is afraid that this would affect its Basque movement, and Greece, that has deep religious ties with Serbia.

Serbia's only ally at the UN Security Council, Russia, opposes independence for the province as well.

After Serbia&rsquo;s illegal annulment of Kosovo&rsquo;s autonomy in 1989, Kosovo Albanians held a referendum for independence in 1991; however, no country has recognized the province so far.

To quell the self-determination movement in the nineties, Serbia&rsquo;s Slobodan Milosevic sent Serbian troops into the province. Brutality of the troops left over 10,000 dead and over one million out of their homes.

To stop the brutal ethnic cleansing and the murder of civilians, NATO began the bombing campaign in March 24, 1999. The UN has administered Kosovo since this bombing campaign forced out Serbian troops in June of the same year.

Serbia has refused to endorse a blueprint prepared by the UN Envoy Marti Ahtisaari that recommends &ldquo;Supervised Independence&rdquo; for Kosovo earlier this year.