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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS
PREVENTIVE DEPLOYMENT FORCE PURSUANT TO SECURITY
COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1142 (1997)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1142 (1997) of 4 December 1997, by which the Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) for the final period until 31 August 1998. The Council also requested that I report to it by 1 June 1998 on the modalities of the termination of UNPREDEP, including practical steps for the complete withdrawal of the military component immediately thereafter, and submit recommendations on the type of international presence that would be most appropriate for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia after 31 August 1998. The present report addresses the Council's requests and covers developments in the mission area since my last report, dated 20 November 1997 (S/1997/911).

II. COMPOSITION, STRENGTH AND MANDATE OF THE UNITED NATIONS PREVENTIVE DEPLOYMENT FORCE

2. During the period under review, the mandate of UNPREDEP has remained unchanged. The mission continues to be headed by my Special Representative, Mr. Henryk J. Sokalski. The military component is headed by the Force Commander, Brigadier-General Bent Sohnemann (Denmark).

3. In accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1110 (1997) of 28 May 1997, the phased reduction of the UNPREDEP military component by 300 all ranks was completed by 30 November 1997, bringing its strength to 750 troops. At the same time, the total number of observation posts was reduced from 19 to 8, all of which are situated at strategic locations along the border with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

4. The military component consists of two mechanized infantry battalions: a Nordic composite battalion and a United States Army task force, each with a strength of 350 personnel, supported by a 50-strong heavy engineering platoon from Indonesia. The United States battalion consists of two line companies and a headquarters company. One line company performs border area duties from four

permanent observation posts and a forward company base camp, while the other company performs reserve and quick reaction force duties. The Nordic battalion also consists of one headquarters company and two line companies. It staffs four observation posts, a permanently manned satellite observation post, a patrol base in Ohrid and two company command posts. In addition, there are 35 military observers and 26 civilian police monitors. The authorized strength of the civilian component, including the local staff, is 203. The international civilian and military personnel are drawn from 48 countries.

5. Along with community and border patrols carried out regularly by the civilian police and military observers, UNPREDEP military personnel have conducted some 400 patrols a week during the reporting period. In order to fulfil the mandated tasks along the country's western border with its reduced troop strength, the military component has increased its patrolling flexibility and made more frequent resort to temporary observation posts. In response to the crisis in Kosovo, UNPREDEP has increased its patrols along the border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, using both ground and air assets. It has also established temporary observation posts for 24-hour monitoring and reporting on activities at the borders throughout its area of operation. Patrolling by boat has also commenced at Ohrid and Prespa Lakes. Such intensive monitoring, however, cannot be sustained over a long period of time with the current troop strength.

6. The civilian component of UNPREDEP has continued to play an important role in the implementation of the mandate of good offices of my Special Representative, especially by conducting an active dialogue with the authorities and all other major political forces in the country. It has monitored developments in the Republic, including possible areas of conflict and the status of application of international standards on human rights. It has offered assistance in strengthening cross-party dialogue, encouraging political and inter-ethnic communication with a view to easing potential tensions and promoting understanding among the various segments of the population. It has also provided assistance in training law enforcement officials. UNPREDEP has continued its close cooperation with the Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The mission is also cooperating with the recently established European Commission Monitoring Mission in the country.

7. Support by several Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has enabled UNPREDEP to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to advance its good offices role and to reach out to the social sector through a number of projects.

III. INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION AND ACTIVITIES OF OTHER UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS, AGENCIES AND PROGRAMMES

8. During the reporting period, a growing number of organizations, agencies and programmes of the United Nations system have pursued a range of different activities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As from 1 June 1998, an office of the United Nations Development Programme, which will further

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enhance inter-agency coordination in various developmental projects in the Republic, will be opened in Skopje.

9. Pursuant to my report to the Council of 20 November 1997 (S/1997/911), my Special Representative convened in Skopje, from 10 to 12 March 1998, a consultative meeting of the entities of the United Nations system on their activities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Twenty-two entities of the system participated in the meeting. Sixteen government ministries and other institutions made presentations on their cooperation with concerned United Nations agencies and programmes.

10. The consultative meeting agreed on a programme of action (see annex I) for a consolidated approach to developmental issues in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

IV. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

11. Since my previous report (S/1997/911), there has been growing concern over the developments in Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and their potential impact upon peace and stability in the region, notably in the countries bordering that province. Issues relating to the situation in Kosovo were addressed in the first report I submitted to the Council pursuant to resolution 1160 (1998) of 31 March 1998 on 30 April 1998 (S/1998/361).

12. The bilateral relations of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with its neighbours have, during the reporting period, generally remained at the level described in my previous reports. However, following the signing of a number of agreements on mutual cooperation and the exchange of several official visits between authorities of the host Government and Albania, a better understanding and better cooperation have developed in the two countries' mutual relations. The assurances given by Prime Minister Fatos Nano that Albania will not support policies of radicalism and conflict constitute an important contribution in that regard.

13. Direct collaborative ventures with Greece have been steadily advancing. Relations with Bulgaria have continued to be affected by the still unresolved dispute over the language issue. The first round-table meeting of intellectuals of the two countries, initiated by the non-governmental community and held in April, has revealed a genuine potential for dialogue and understanding in the search for mutually acceptable solutions.

14. The question of the demarcation of the border between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remains unresolved. The protracted discussions of the Joint Border Commission have led to intensified patrolling by both parties in some of the disputed areas of the border. This has placed an additional burden upon United Nations peacekeepers, who have established a presence in those areas to prevent incidents. Following an eight-month suspension of work, the Commission resumed its deliberations last month. However, its two subsequent meetings do not seem to have produced progress in the long-delayed resolution of the problem. In that regard, there are indications that the issue of the demarcation of the border has become

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hostage to extraneous political considerations and that the parties might have difficulties in finding a mutually agreeable solution.

15. On the domestic political scene, developments have followed an uneven course. Following the earlier consensus reached on the country's major foreign policy issues, the inter-party dialogue held under the auspices of the President of the Republic has continued with a third political summit devoted to inter-ethnic relations, held on 2 and 3 April. Although participants at the summit failed to agree on a joint statement, the dialogue was open and conducted in a spirit of tolerance. At the same time, the Constitutional Court of the Republic concluded that the statutes of the two ethnic Albanian parties (the Party for Democratic Prosperity of Albanians and the National Democratic Party) seeking a merger into the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) were not contrary to the Constitution. Soon thereafter, the main political youth organizations of the country, including ethnic ones, signed a joint declaration on tolerance. These positive developments are conducive to improved inter-ethnic relations in the country.

16. The process of internal reforms has been enhanced by the adoption of the electoral law, which was finalized in consultation with major political parties, the Council of Europe and OSCE. At the request of the Government, the United Nations provided an expert to assist the electoral authorities to review the final draft of the electoral law. The forthcoming national elections, to be held in late 1998, will constitute an important test for the country's young democracy and for its progress towards building a civil society.

17. On the other hand, there has been criticism of the human rights situation in the country from some reputable international non-governmental organizations. The country's opposition parties and independent media have also objected to the existing procedures for the distribution of radio and television frequencies and to the allocation of funds to support the printed media. In addition, the overall climate of inter-ethnic relations has been negatively affected by the imprisonment of the ethnic Albanian Mayor of Gostivar, Mr. Rufi Osmani (see my earlier reports S/1997/631, para. 16, and S/1997/911, para. 20). On appeal, Mr. Osmani's sentence was recently reduced from 13 years and 8 months to 7 years. Although all means of appeal had not yet been fully exhausted, Mr. Osmani was called to serve his sentence. His subsequent imprisonment sparked a series of protest marches launched by the still unregistered ethnic Albanian DPA, as well as the withdrawal or suspension of its mayors, municipal councillors and members of Parliament from the relevant State structures, thus adding to the complexity of inter-ethnic relations in the country. In contrast to earlier practice, a request by United Nations civilian police monitors to visit Mr. Osmani in prison has been denied by the authorities.

18. The Parliamentary Commission investigating the 9 July 1997 police action in Gostivar submitted its report in March 1998. The report concluded, inter alia, that there had been some exceeding of authority on the part of certain individuals and groups and that the excess of use of authority by certain police representatives in the course of detention of citizens during and after their action was indisputable. On the basis of the report, the National Assembly obligated the Government to report, by 31 May 1998, on action taken to improve the ethnic structure of the police force, to enhance human rights training of

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the police and to effect disciplinary measures against police officers who had overstepped their authority in connection with the Gostivar events.

V. OBSERVATIONS

19. Peace and stability in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to depend largely on developments in other parts of the region. Recent developments in Kosovo have highlighted the danger of renewed violence in the area and the serious repercussions such violence can have upon the external and internal security of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Elsewhere in the region, the slow progress in implementing some civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Accords in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in initiating a comprehensive regional programme for the return of refugees and displaced persons remain areas for concern that could affect regional peace and security.

20. Moreover, the continuing uncertainties in the region may exacerbate domestic problems within the host country, particularly those relating to inter-ethnic relations. At present, a truly consistent trend towards an improvement in inter-ethnic tensions in a spirit of mutual understanding appears to be lacking. Over the past few years, a number of international entities, notably those of the United Nations system, OSCE, European governmental structures and Governments of Member States, on a bilateral basis, have been actively engaged in strengthening pluralism and democratic reforms in the country. Although progress has been made in that direction, that progress may still be reversed under the pressure of external developments.

21. The presence of UNPREDEP presence has so far contributed successfully to preventing the spillover of conflicts elsewhere in the region to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It continues to have a stabilizing effect and to contribute significantly to generating dialogue among the various political forces and ethnic communities in the country. During the past few months, the confidence inspired by the presence of UNPREDEP has been particularly important in diffusing the tensions that could have arisen as a result of the crisis in Kosovo.

22. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in a letter addressed to me on 15 May 1998 (S/1998/401), referred to the changed circumstances in the region which, in his view, mitigate against any weakening of the international presence in the country. He expressed his Government's concern over the negative developments north of the border, especially in Kosovo, the yet unmarked border between the Republic and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the tensions along the border between Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Minister further expressed concern that, under those circumstances, the peace and stability of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia could be endangered and that a security gap would arise in the region should the military component of UNPREDEP be withdrawn after 31 August. Consequently, the Minister recommended an extension of UNPREDEP for an additional period of six months, with the same mandate, structure and troop composition.

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23. At the time of the writing of the present report, discussions were under way within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and elsewhere concerning the possible need for an expanded international military presence in the region as a consequence of the current situation in Kosovo. Furthermore, consultations are continuing with a view to adopting a decision on the establishment of a comprehensive regime to monitor the implementation of the prohibitions imposed by Security Council resolution 1160 (1998). In both cases, the outcome may well have implications for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and therefore also on UNPREDEP. In the meantime, it would seem premature to proceed with a decision to withdraw UNPREDEP after 31 August 1998. Nor do I possess the requisite information, at this juncture, to submit recommendations on the type of international presence that would be most appropriate for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia after 31 August.

24. Against this background and bearing in mind also the position of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, one possible option that the Security Council may wish to consider would be to extend UNPREDEP with its mandate unchanged for a further period of six months until 28 February 1999, it being understood that the Council would review its decision should the ongoing discussions at the international level, referred to in the previous paragraph, result in decisions that would affect the role and responsibilities of UNPREDEP.

25. Meanwhile, the fulfilment of the Force's mandated tasks along the borders with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have already stretched the reduced strength of the operation to the limit (see para. 3 above). As a result, following the deterioration of the situation in Kosovo, UNPREDEP has not been able to maintain an extensive presence along that stretch of the border for a sustained period of time without jeopardizing the implementation of its other tasks. Thus, within its current strength, any further escalation of the crisis in Kosovo could have negative operational consequences for the Force and undermine its impressive record of achievements to date. Consequently, it would be my intention to submit, by 15 July, should the Security Council so wish, specific proposals on a possible strengthening of the Force's overall capacity, taking into consideration the situation in the region and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including 795 (1992) of 11 December 1992 and 1160 (1998).

26. Finally, I should like to thank my Special Representative, Mr. Sokalski, as well as the Force Commander, Brigadier-General Sohnemann, and all the military and civilian personnel under their command, for their dedication and perseverance in carrying out the tasks entrusted to them by the Security Council.

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Annex I

Findings and conclusions of the consultative meeting of the
entities of the United Nations system on their activities
in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

I. FINDINGS

1. In line with the evolving philosophy of preventive diplomacy and peace-building, as expressed in several pronouncements of the Secretary-General and the Security Council, the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) has successfully combined troop deployment, political action and good offices with the promotion of human development.
2. The Government's pronouncements at the consultative meeting have shown that it has charted a course that leads to vigorous actions to address the pressing problems of a difficult transition and has laid the foundation for sustained economic recovery. During the past six years, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has made substantial strides in a multiple transition to independent statehood, a free market economy, a pluralist democracy and an état de droit. Considerable progress has been accomplished in spite of many difficulties encountered in a turbulent environment.
3. The challenges confronting the country in the short run include a substantial reduction of productive capacity and growth in unemployment and its attendant social ills, often exacerbated by the country's exposed geographic position. The problems of drug trafficking, corruption and criminality are symptoms of deeper underlying social and economic problems that a coherent strategy of the Government can effectively address, supported by consistent efforts on the part of the international community.
4. The deliberations of the consultative meeting have pointed to a consensus on the main components of a strategy, contributing to the preservation and further consolidation of peace, stability and sustainable development, namely:
 - (a) Regional and international cooperation based on expanded trade, economic, political and cultural relations, including the exchange of experience on issues of transition;
 - (b) Confidence-building measures, including macroeconomic stability, essential to the development of a propitious climate for business initiatives and for attracting foreign and domestic investment into agriculture, industry and services sectors, and thereby promoting employment;
 - (c) Measures to establish an enabling legislative framework for private sector development;
 - (d) Structural reforms and modernization required to prepare the ground for a competitive export-oriented economy;

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(e) Administrative reforms to strengthen public administration, corporate governance and transparency and professionalism in public sector management, which complement the measures in (b), (c) and (d) above, including the promotion of human resources development and training;

(f) Consolidation of an état de droit based on the rule of law, good governance, social dialogue, an active civil society and respect for human rights, underpinning the Office of the Ombudsman;

(g) Upgrading of physical infrastructure required for the development of industry, including that of civil aviation, roads and railroads and communication networks, tourism and trade;

(h) Protection of the environment and health as well as the country's diversified cultural heritage;

(i) Promotion and facilitation of social service reform, notably education, social protection and security and health, consistent with the country's goal of integration into the European Union.

The participants emphasized that the United Nations system, in tandem with its partners in the international community, can facilitate the Government's efforts to overcome pressing economic and social problems and lay the foundations for sustainable development.

5. The mission of UNPREDEP has included an important humanitarian and human development dimension which has complemented the military and political functions and served to build confidence between the host country and the United Nations. It has also proved to be catalytic in paving the road for initiatives that several United Nations agencies and other regional organizations have undertaken with considerable success.

6. Both on the side of the Government and among the agencies represented at the meeting, there was strong support for the concept of a common "United Nations house", including a resource centre of the entire United Nations system in Skopje. Specifically, the host Government expressed its firm commitment to the implementation of this idea as a means of facilitating the pursuit of a joint inter-agency effort and sustainable course of action.

II. CONCLUSIONS

7. The participants welcomed the forthcoming establishment of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country office to continue and expand the social action programme of UNPREDEP, which thus far has comprised mainly micro-development projects. In voicing strong support for an expanded role of the United Nations system, the participants stressed certain important factors that optimize delivery and secure long-term effectiveness. Foremost among these is the need for closer coordination and clear focus of United Nations activities in economic and social development.

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8. The meeting participants were informed of the recommendations contained in the recently published national development strategy. They noted that the strategy provided a useful framework for integrating the various operational activities sponsored and undertaken by the United Nations and the wider international community in partnership with the Government.

9. The participants recognized that the agencies of the United Nations system in the field needed to forge closer operational linkages in the spirit of "one unified system operating under one flag". Every opportunity must be taken to build greater synergies among the programmes of the agencies. Accordingly, the participants called for the establishment of a framework for cooperation based on national priorities, agency complementarities and shared goals.

10. In the above context, the participants believed that the establishment of a common "United Nations house", including a resource centre of the whole United Nations system in Skopje, would enhance the value, efficiency and effectiveness of their respective activities in support of national development.

11. To implement the strategy outlined in paragraph 4 above, United Nations agencies, supported by UNDP, as appropriate, should pay particular attention to the following:

- (a) Assisting the Government in its efforts to mobilize resources in support of strategic national goals;

- (b) Emphasizing all cross-cutting issues contained in the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations global conferences of the past two decades;

- (c) Helping to ensure the compatibility of national legislation with international standards and strengthening the capacity of national structures for their implementation;

- (d) Establishing the common "United Nations house".

12. In conclusion, the participants thanked UNPREDEP for its timely initiative in organizing the consultative meeting and expressed the hope that the meeting would assist and pave the way for a continued presence of the United Nations system, in line with the expressed wishes of the host Government. They believed that such presence was necessary and would prove conducive to the consolidation of peace in the region and the successful completion of the process of transition, which would enable the country to meet the major challenges of globalization and integration into the wider European and world communities.

Annex II

Composition and strength of the military and civilian police
elements of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force as
at 22 May 1998

Nationality	Military			Civilian police
	Operational	Headquarters	Military observers	
Argentina	-	-	1	-
Bangladesh	-	-	2	-
Belgium	-	-	1	-
Brazil	-	-	2	-
Canada	-	-	1	-
Czech Republic	-	-	1	-
Denmark	38	9	1	-
Egypt	-	-	1	-
Finland	205	13	1	6
Ghana	-	-	1	-
Indonesia	50	1	2	-
Ireland	-	-	2	-
Jordan	-	-	2	2
Kenya	-	-	2	-
Nepal	-	-	1	-
New Zealand	-	-	1	-
Nigeria	-	-	1	4
Norway	38	6	2	-
Pakistan	-	-	2	-
Poland	-	-	2	-
Portugal	-	-	1	-
Russian Federation	-	-	2	2
Sweden	32	8	1	-
Switzerland	-	-	1	4
Turkey	-	-	-	4
Ukraine	-	-	1	4
United States of America	339	11	-	-
Total	702	48	35	26

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