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## Kosovo leaders focus on independence, power transfer at Vienna seminar

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Text of report by Rifat Buzuku: "Kosovar leaders learn about compromise, justice", published by Kosovo Albanian newspaper Koha Ditore on 18 December

Stadtschlaining, 17 December: On Wednesday 17 December, Kosovar leaders ended a seminar sponsored by the **Project on Justice in Times of Transition**, and organized by the Austrian Centre for Studies on Conflict Resolutions and Peace and Ulof Palme International Centre. For two days in a row, Kosovar leaders had the opportunity to hear presentations from such diplomats as William Walker (former head of OSCE Verification Mission in Kosova Kosovo) and Wolfgang Petritsch (former EU mediator during the war in Kosova), as well as testimonies from the interesting experiences of some mediators, namely participants in the negotiating processes in the Israeli-Palestinian, Northern Ireland and South Africa conflicts.

According to sources participating in the seminar, Kosovar leaders also had the opportunity to express their views. In a speech held on Tuesday, Kosova President Ibrahim Rugova emphasized that if the independence of Kosova had been recognized on time, Kosova today would not have the problems it currently faces. He repeated his well-known request for formal recognition of Kosova's independence, a step that would influence the region's stabilization.

In his speech, Kosova Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi focused mainly on the transfer of powers from UNMIK UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to the institutions of Kosova and the fulfilment of the Standards by the end of the planning period, June 2005.

Talking to Koha Ditore, PDK Democratic Party of Kosovo chairman Hashim Thaci assessed the seminar as quite useful. He said that this was a good opportunity to exchange views with people who have gone through difficult processes, and that the Kosovar delegation also had the opportunity to present its experience and positions.

PDK chairman Thaci said that during the two days of discussions at Stadtschlaining Castle, he quite frequently heard the words "compromise" and "changing positions".

"I expressed my opinion that the internationals should change in relation to Kosova and Kosovars, because the leaders cannot change the will of the people of Kosova for statehood," he said.

As for the request for dialogue, Thaci said that initially there should be a dialogue between the Albanians, between the communities that live in Kosova, and then with its neighbours. He said that he could not understand how a dialogue with neighbours could start outside the institutional way.

"In the Balkans problems cannot be resolved on an ethnic basis, but on the basis of civil democracy," Thaci

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outlined.

Kosovar leaders will return to Kosova on Thursday.

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