

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
The Minister

Republic of France
Paris, 11 December 08

Dear Madam,

Your letter of 20 November 2008 drew my attention, and that of Mr Jean-Pierre Jouyet, Secretary of State for European Affairs, to the situation of Roma families who remain in the Osterode and Cesmin Lug camps in Kosovo despite the serious lead pollution affecting those sites.

I fully share your concern. In 1999, when we visited the camps together, the danger to the inhabitants from lead pollution was obvious.

Some progress has certainly been made: the most insanitary camps have been closed and their inhabitants rehoused. The EU and several Member States have taken steps to encourage their resettlement elsewhere in Kosovo, notably by financing construction of homes.

This progress is not sufficient, however, since families are still living in unacceptable conditions in the Osterode and Cesmin Lug camps. Part of the difficulty lies in their reluctance to accept offers of resettlement. The Kosovan Roma, more so than other communities, continue to suffer discrimination and some families who fear for their safety refuse to leave the camps where they are protected by KFOR.

The EU is putting the necessary measures into place to help find a solution. The Office of the European Commission in Pristina is now following this issue closely. During his visit to Kosovo at the end of November, Mr Pierre Mirel, DG Enlargement's Director for the Western Balkans, discussed the subject with the Prime Minister of Kosovo. At the plenary meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Process Tracking Mechanism in Pristina on 2 December, Mr Thaci promised to attend personally to this matter and to look for new sites.

I have instructed the Ambassador of France in Kosovo to follow the implementation of these commitments with the greatest possible attention.

Thank you for having drawn our attention to a problem that has lasted for too long.

[Handwritten] Yours sincerely¹,
Bernard Kouchner

¹ Literally something like: "I beg you to approve, Madam, my respectful and cordial wishes". Probably less formal wording than a Minister would use to, say, a member of the public.