



VLADA REPUBLIKE HRVATSKE

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## Croatia recognises Kosovo



*ZAGREB, March 19 (Hina) - The Croatian government on Wednesday recognised Kosovo's independence, thus joining some 30 countries that have recognised Kosovo so far. Deputy Prime Minister Slobodan Uzelac of the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS) voted against the government decision, offering his resignation to Prime Minister Ivo Sanader.*

Informing reporters about the government's decision to recognise Kosovo in the government headquarters, PM Sanader said that Uzelac did not support the decision nor a joint statement by Croatia, Hungary and Bulgaria whereby the three countries earlier today announced their intention to recognise Kosovo.

Kosovo declared its independence on February 17, provoking fierce reactions from Belgrade.

Sanader said that he fully understood Uzelac's decision and the position of the SDSS, stressing that he did not want Uzelac or his party to leave the government.

"I understand Uzelac's decision, but I still want him in my team and in the government," Sanader said.

Uzelac said that he had "offered his resignation for consideration" because the government's decision to recognise Kosovo was a serious decision which the SDSS believed could jeopardise the common plan from the coalition agreement to develop and preserve good neighbourly relations with Serbia.

Sanader said he understood that the issue of Kosovo's independence was a difficult one for Serbia and that this was one of the reasons why Croatia had stalled recognition of Kosovo, but he stressed that he wanted good neighbourly relations with Serbia, both political and economic ones, to continue.

He also said that he did not receive any information on the possible withdrawal of the Serbian Ambassador to Zagreb, which had been announced previously by Serbia.

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