KOSOVO



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- While formal accession to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) is not currently possible for Kosovo, as it is not yet recognised as a state by the depository to the Convention, Kosovo should submit a letter to the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General stating that it intends to fully comply, on a voluntary basis, with the APMBC.
- This should include the submission of a voluntary Article 7 transparency report on an annual basis, as Kosovo has proposed in its Mine Action Strategy 2019–24.
- The Kosovo Mine Action Centre (KMAC) should continue its efforts to ensure timely and efficient clearance of anti-personnel mines, in line with the objectives in its latest mine action strategy and complete clearance by the end of 2024.
- Where necessary, evidence-based survey should be conducted to confirm the presence of mines before embarking on full clearance of mined areas.
- KMAC and international mine action operators should increase their collaboration to seek additional funding and greater financial stability for mine action.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Kosovo is contaminated by mines, cluster munition remnants (CMR), and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), primarily as a result of the conflict between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the late 1990s, and between Yugoslavia and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states in 1999. At the end of 2019, 35 confirmed mined areas remained, covering almost 1.36km²; including four confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) totalling 425,000m² which contained mixed mine and CMR contamination.²

The end-2019 figure is a significant increase on the 1.2km² of mined area, across 44 CHAs, reported for the end of 2018.³ According to KMAC, the reason for the increase in Kosovo's baseline of anti-personnel mine contamination is that the 1.36km² of mined area includes mixed anti-personnel mine and cluster munition remnant contamination, whereas previously mixed contamination had not been included in the baseline of mined area.⁴

The last comprehensive survey of contamination in Kosovo was in 2013, during which The HALO Trust and KMAC conducted thousands of community surveys and confirmed 130 hazardous areas: 79 mined areas covering an estimated 2.76km² and 51 cluster munition strikes covering an estimated 7.63km².5

KMAC believes the current baseline of contamination to be reasonably accurate, evidence-based, and complete, but said there may still be reports by locals in the future of previously unknown areas suspected to be contaminated by mines.

The HALO Trust believes Kosovo's current baseline reflects a relatively accurate picture of the remaining contamination, but suggests that it would benefit from a critical review and further assessment of the existing 2013 survey data. This would inform future targeting of survey and clearance of remaining contamination, in order to achieve completion by the target date of 2024.⁷

Both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines were used during the conflict, in fixed-pattern minefields as well as more randomly in "nuisance" minefields. Many anti-personnel mines had minimal metal content. Although the total number of mines emplaced during the conflict is not known, the UN Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC) reported, as at 31 May 2000, that a total of 7,232 mines had been cleared in the preceding year (3,448 anti-personnel mines and 3,784 anti-vehicle mines). The UN reported in 2002 that "the problems associated with landmines, cluster munitions and other items of unexploded ordnance [UXO] in Kosovo have been virtually eliminated", but further investigation revealed that considerably more contamination remained to be addressed.

EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR AND CLUSTER MUNITION REMNANTS

In addition to contamination from mines, Kosovo is contaminated with CMR (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants* report on Kosovo for further information) as well as other ERW. Kosovo Protection Force (KFOR) and Kosovo Security Force (KSF) explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams regularly dispose of ERW in response to information provided by the public and demining organisations.¹²

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In January 2011, the EOD Coordination Management Section became KMAC, responsible for managing survey and clearance of mines and ERW throughout Kosovo. KMAC prepares an annual work plan in cooperation with international demining NGOs and coordinates their operations along with the national demining teams of the KSF. It also coordinates survey, quality assurance, risk education, public information, and victim assistance activities. KMAC's role and responsibilities as head of the national mine action programme under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence were established and institutionalised by Kosovo's 2012 Law on Humanitarian Demining. 14

In 2019, KMAC had five permanent staff: a Director, a Senior Quality Assurance (QA) Officer, a QA Inspector, a Mine Risk Education (MRE) Officer, and a Public Information Officer.¹⁵

Kosovo's mine action programme is fully nationally owned, with a strong, longstanding commitment from the national government. The dedicated team of permanent national staff have been employed by KMAC since its creation. This has benefitted the programme with the retention of experience and institutional memory.¹⁶

NGO operators in Kosovo report having a constructive and proactive working relationship with KMAC. HALO Trust staff meet with the director of KMAC for monthly coordination

meetings,¹⁷ and, in addition, KMAC's QA officers visit HALO Trust on a quarterly basis to discuss operations planning, along with conducting unannounced weekly field visits to HALO tasks.¹⁸

In 2019, the Kosovo government provided €990,000 in financial support to KMAC, and to the KSF for mine and ERW clearance.¹⁹

Kosovo's current Mine Action Strategy 2019–24 sets out the objective of intensifying resource mobilisation efforts in order to gain greater financial stability. While a specific resource mobilisation strategy does not exist, operators reported that coordinated approaches with KMAC were made to potential donors such as the United States and the European Union. ²¹

Unfortunately, the misperception persists that mine, CMR, and other ERW clearance in Kosovo was completed in 2001, whereas the reality is that significant contamination remains. Kosovo remains a poor country and needs economic assistance to help it complete clearance in a timely manner, hopefully in less than five years if sufficient support is provided. In 2019, KMAC identified funding and logistical support as the two primary areas where it could most benefit from assistance from international donors and mine action operators.²²

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy 2019–24 reflects the commitment of the mine action programme to ensure that gender is taken into consideration in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of all mine action projects, with a view to promoting equality and quality.²³ The Strategy stipulates that all mine action activities and assistance must reflect the needs of different ages and gender in a targeted and non-discriminatory manner, and that mine action and community liaison data are also to be collected and systematically disaggregated according to sex and age.²⁴

Both KMAC and KSF have gender policies in place. KMAC reported that the KSF's gender policy aims to facilitate the consultation of all groups affected by mines and ERW, expressly women and children. Within KMAC, one of its five staff (the MRE Officer) is a woman. A total of 5% of KSF staff employed in operational mine action roles were women, but none is in a managerial or supervisory position.²⁵

Kosovo's mine action strategy recognises the barriers that exist against equal employment in Kosovo society, including significant differences in employment levels between men and women, despite the number of men and women of working age being broadly similar. The Strategy notes that, as at 2019, more than four-fifths of women of working age were not employed in Kosovo's labour market, and less than one in eight women of working age has been employed annually over the past five years. The primary reasons given by women for unemployment are child and family care obligations, which traditionally fall on women in Kosovo society. The Strategy notes the efforts of mine action operators to overcome these challenges and barriers to employment, such as through child care and parental leave, and gender-sensitive recruitment practices that encourage women to apply for

positions traditionally seen as jobs for men. It further recalls the importance of employment of not only multi-gender, but also multi-ethnic survey and clearance teams and the particular benefits of recruitment in areas affected by high unemployment and poor socio-economic conditions.²⁶

In 2018, The HALO Trust developed a gender policy in consultation with the Kosovo Women's Network, an advocacy network of more than 140 member organisations, including women's organisations of all ethnic backgrounds from throughout Kosovo, which was adopted in February. The policy aims both at increasing the recruitment of women, as well as retention of existing female employees.²⁷ In 2019, HALO further developed this policy to include provision for increased family leave and child-care allowances for those taking care of children, in order to remove barriers to women's employment. Through the Dutch Government, HALO Trust contracted the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP, a part of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, GICHD) to conduct gender sensitivity and leadership training in July 2019 to more than 20 managers in the global organisation, to address issues of unconscious bias and inclusion.28

In HALO Trust's Kosovo programme, 17% of employees are women, including in 14% of operational roles in survey and clearance teams, although there were no women in operational management positions in 2019. HALO also ensures that community liaison teams are gender balanced and include senior personnel fluent in relevant languages, to ensure that community liaison activities are inclusive for ethnic or minority groups.²⁹

Although HALO Trust is committed to increasing the number of women in the organisation generally and specifically in management roles, without recruitment or expansion opportunities, this has proved difficult. In May 2019, however, HALO trained and promoted four women to operate Handheld Stand-off Mine Detection System (HSTAMIDS) detectors – a first for the programme. In 2020, HALO was planning to train and promote Assistant Team Leaders, and sees this as an opportunity to increase the representation of women in operational management.³⁰ Relevant mine action data are disaggregated by gender and age, and data collected post-clearance is also disaggregated to ensure the understanding and analysis of impact of mine action activities takes gender into consideration.³¹

According to KMAC, Kosovo's baseline of anti-personnel mine contamination has been established through inclusive consultation with women, girls, boys, and men, including, where relevant, from minority groups.³²

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

KMAC uses the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) New Generation version for its national mine action database. Data are disaggregated between mines, CMR, and other ERW.³³ Operators were positive in their assessments of the quality and accessibility of data contained in the database and of KMAC's information management systems in general. Operators report to KMAC on a weekly basis.³⁴ However, there continued to be significant discrepancies between land release data reported to Mine Action Review by clearance operators, compared to data reported by KMAC.

According to its most recent mine action strategy, KMAC intended, as a means to show its commitment to the APMBC, to submit voluntary Article 7 transparency reports on an annual basis.³⁵ In disappointing news, KMAC subsequently advised Mine Action Review that Kosovo would only start submitting Article 7 reports when it becomes a member of the UN.³⁶

PLANNING AND TASKING

The GICHD supported the development of Kosovo's new Mine Action Strategy for 2019–24, bringing together a wide range of national and international stakeholders in a strategy stakeholder workshop in Pristina in October 2018. The strategy, formally approved in January 2019 and launched by the Ministry of Kosovo Security Services on 4 April 2019, has three goals:

- Mine/ERW threats managed and reduced
- Communication and awareness raising
- Management of residual contamination.

The strategy declares that all known mined and CMR-contaminated areas will be addressed by the end of 2024, leaving only residual contamination to be managed accordingly. It contains annual projections for anti-personnel mine clearance, including:

- all high priority anti-personnel mine tasks (numbering 8 as at October 2018) will be cleared by the end of 2020
- all medium-priority anti-personnel mine tasks
 (25 as at October 2018) will be cleared by 2022; and
- all low-priority anti-personnel mine tasks
 (15 as at October 2018) will be completed by 2024.³⁷

Planned completion of clearance of the high priority tasks by the end of 2020 may be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁸

The strategy states it is based on a number of assumptions, including that the necessary funding will be secured and that no new mined or CMR-contaminated areas are identified. It notes, however, that "so far each year 3–4 different affected areas have been reported" and that should this trend continue, capacity and progress will need to be reassessed with regards to the 2024 deadline.³⁹

As per the strategy, KMAC will develop annual operational work plans to implement the strategy's goals. 40 KMAC will also request an external mid-term review of the strategy in 2022 to evaluate progress and make any adaptations according to contextual changes if required. 41

In 2019, KMAC confirmed that it had developed annual operational work plans to target anti-personnel mined areas, according to impact-based criteria, including risk reduction, development priorities, and poverty reduction, along with the findings of a nationwide baseline socio-economic impact assessment carried out in 2018 by KMAC, with the support of The HALO Trust.⁴² The mine action strategy for 2019–24 is also in alignment with the objectives of Kosovo's National Development Strategy 2016–2021.⁴³

In 2019, The HALO Trust developed a new prioritisation system that takes into account the "community profile" for a task. This system draws on several factors, such as socio-economic status, planned land use, government development plans, and demographics. All information is collected from government and public data as well as from extensive community survey.

In 2020, KMAC planned that clearance would start on nine mined areas. $^{\rm 45}$

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

National mine action standards for land release are in place in Kosovo, which according to KMAC are in accord with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).⁴⁶

A 2014 evaluation of Kosovo's mine action programme, conducted on behalf of the International Trust Fund (ITF) Enhancing Human Security, concluded that an increase in capacity and improvements to land release methodology and equipment deployed would be necessary if Kosovo were to complete clearance operations by 2024. Since the 2014 evaluation, a number of significant improvements have been introduced to the mine action programme, including the introduction of HSTAMID detectors by The HALO Trust, which have advanced operational productivity.⁴⁷

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2019, Kosovo's national mine action programme's capacity consisted of two international operators, The HALO Trust and NPA, and national operator, the KSF. However, NPA did not conduct survey or clearance of anti-personnel mined area in 2019, solely focusing on CMR.⁴⁸ The demining season is from the end of March to the end of November, due to weather conditions.⁴⁹

HALO Trust's operational personnel are cross-trained for mine clearance and battle area clearance (BAC) and can move readily between activities. On average, in 2019, The HALO Trust deployed 48 deminers to mine clearance tasks – a slight increase on the previous year.⁵⁰

KSF operated two manual clearance teams in 2019, totalling 20 deminers, and expected capacity to remain the same in 2020.51 KFOR supports the KSF and Kosovo Police with EOD response tasks and organising mine and ERW demolitions in Mitrovica and the north of Kosovo.52

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2019

A total of almost 0.32km² of mined area was released in 2019: 0.27km² through clearance and 0.05km² cancelled through non-technical survey.⁵³

SURVEY IN 2019

A total of more than 0.05km² was cancelled through non-technical survey in 2019 (see Table 1). Whereas KMAC did not report any mined area as having been reduced through technical survey in 2019,⁵⁴ HALO Trust reported reducing 92,761m² through technical survey during the year.⁵⁵

Table 1: Cancellation through non-technical survey in 2019⁵⁶

Operator	Area cancelled (m²)
HALO Trust	25,049
KSF	26,500
Total	51,549

This is an increase in non-technical survey, compared to 2018, when no mined area was cancelled, but is a decrease on the 114,000m² reduced through technical survey in 2018.⁵⁷

While KMAC did not report any anti-personnel mined area as having been reduced through technical survey in 2019, HALO Trust reported reducing 92,761m², across the districts of Ferizaj, Gjakova, Mitrovice, and Prizren. HALO Trust applies reduction to tasks once clearance has been completed.⁵⁸

CLEARANCE IN 2019

In 2019, a total of almost 0.27km² of anti-personnel mined area was cleared, with 21 anti-personnel mines, 1 anti-vehicle mine, and 5 items of UXO found and destroyed (see Table 2).⁵⁹ This was a slight increase in the area cleared compared to 2018, when just over 0.22km² of anti-personnel mined area was cleared, with 46 anti-personnel mines found and destroyed.⁶⁰

Table 2: Mine clearance in 201961

Operator	Area cleared (m²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
HALO Trust	221,246	17	1	0
KSF	47,390	4	0	5
Totals	268,636	21	1	5

A further 20 anti-personnel mines were destroyed by the KSF in EOD response tasks in 2019.⁶² As Kosovo has strict national procedures for the management of explosives, the KSF, with support from KFOR in northern Kosovo, carries out the destruction of mines. CMR, and other ERW found by The HALO Trust and NPA.⁶³

Compared to the previous year, in 2019, The HALO Trust saw an increase of mine clearance productivity by some 13% based on its own data, as a result of increasing team numbers and introducing a greater number of HSTAMIDS detectors.⁶⁴

During operations in 2019, three mined areas were cleared in which no anti-personnel mines were found: Deve (4,247m²), Rrasa e Zogut (3,227m²), and Shkoza (4,400m²). 65 Evidence of mines, particularly PMR2-A, was present at some tasks, 66 but

it still highlights the need for robust evidence-based survey prior to any clearance.

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Kosovo cannot formally adhere to the APMBC and therefore does not have a specific clearance deadline under Article 5. Nonetheless, it has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines as soon as possible.

As stated in Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy 2019–24, which sets completion of mine and cluster munition clearance by the end of 2024, completion will only be achievable if sustained funding is secured.⁶⁷ Specific concerns are elaborated in the strategy about the need to upgrade old equipment, including vehicles to proceed without unnecessary stand-downs or costly repairs.⁶⁸

As at April 2020, KMAC reported that it still expects to clear all known mined areas by the end of 2024. From The HALO Trust reported that it requires increased capacity to complete mine clearance by the end of 2024, as the funding commitment as at May 2020 was not sufficient. HALO also highlighted the need for a review of the current data on mined areas, including an evaluation of survey polygons, and application of efficient land release methodologies, in order to ensure coordinated and cost-effective targeting of clearance. To

Assuming the target is met, completion of mine clearance in 2024 would be 25 years after the end of the conflict between the FRY forces and NATO and more than 20 years after the UN claimed that clearance was largely complete.

Table 3: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance

Year	Area cleared (km²)
2019	0.27
2018	0.22
2017	0.23
2016	0.15
2015	0.22
Total	1.09

PLANNING FOR RESIDUAL RISK AFTER COMPLETION

According to Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy 2019–24, a separate national strategy on the management of residual contamination will be developed by KMAC by 2023, in collaboration with other national actors. This will clarify roles and responsibilities in order to manage what is expected to be a long-term residual contamination problem.⁷¹

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- 2 Email from Ahmet Sallova, Head of Mine Action Centre, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 3 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 11 July 2019.
- 4 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 July 2020.
- 5 HALO Trust, "Action on cluster munitions in Kosovo", Side event, First Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) Review Conference, Dubrovnik, 10 September 2015.
- 6 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 7 Email from Olivia Meader, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 8 ICRC, Explosive Remnants of War, Cluster Bombs and Landmines in Kosovo, June 2001 p. 15
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 "UNMIK Mine Action Programme Annual Report 2001", Mine Action Coordination Cell, Pristina, undated but 2002, p. 1.
- 11 HALO Trust, "Failing the Kosovars: The Hidden Impact and Threat from ERW", Report, 15 December 2006, p. 1.
- 12 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 1 August 2012.
- 13 Ibid
- 14 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 June and 3 July 2017; and Ministry of Defence, "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 3.
- 15 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 16 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, pp. 5–6.
- 17 Emails from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020; and Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 18 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 19 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- $20\,$ "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 14.
- 21 Email from Terje Eldøen, NPA, 25 April 2019.
- 22 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 30 April 2019.
- 23 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 8.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 26 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, pp. 8–9.
- 27 Ibid., p. 8.
- 28 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 29 Emails from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 1 May 2019 and 22 May 2020.
- 30 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 31 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 1 May 2019; and "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 8.
- 32 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 33 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 30 April 2019.
- 34 Emails from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 1 May 2019; and Terje Eldøen, NPA, 25 April 2019.
- 35 "Mine Action Strategy 2019-2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 13.

- 36 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 37 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 12.
- 38 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 July 2020,
- 39 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, pp. 9–10.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid., p. 16.
- 42 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 30 April 2019; and Tom Welling, HALO Trust, 7 May 2018.
- 43 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 1.
- 44 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 45 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Emails from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 1 May 2019; and Terje Eldøen, NPA, 25 April 2019.
- 48 Email from Terje Eldøen, NPA, 12 May 2020.
- 49 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 3.
- 50 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 51 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 52 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 4; and interview with Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, Pristina, 5 April 2019.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 56 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020; and Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020. However, while KMAC reported that HALO cancelled 25,049m² in 2019, HALO itself did not report cancelling any mined area during the year.
- 57 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 11 July 2019 and Mike Newton, HALO Trust, 28 July 2019.
- 58 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 59 Emails from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May and 23 June 2020; and Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April and 16 July 2020.
- 60 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 11 July 2019.
- 61 Emails from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May and 23 June 2020; and Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April and 16 July 2020. However, there was a discrepancy between clearance data reported by KMAC for HALO Trust and that reported by HALO Trust itself. KMAC reported that HALO cleared a total of 420,875m², with the destruction of a total of 59 anti-personnel mines and 1 anti-vehicle mine.
- 62 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 63 Interview with Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, Pristina, 5 April 2019.
- 64 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 65 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020
- 66 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- 67 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 6.
- 68 Ibid
- 69 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.
- 70 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO Trust, 22 May 2020.
- "1 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 15.