

Lisbon, Mar 14 (Lusa) - The Ambassador of Serbia in Lisbon told Lusa that all possibilities remain open on the issue of Kosovo, but still dependent on international relations and the "wisdom" of both sides.

"The situation is complicated, now also with the US and UK with different approaches. In this situation, all possibilities are open. It depends on international relations, it depends on the wisdom, let us say, on the two sides", the Ambassador of Serbia, Oliver Antić, told Lusa.

"We are trying to demonstrate to everyone, especially Europe, but also the United States, that our approach is peaceful, normal, and that Pristina's approach is unacceptable for everyone", said the diplomat, a doctorate in University of Belgrade in 1983 and with a long academic career.

"With this rate madness, new platforms, where (the Kosovar Albanians) have all the rights and the Serbs none, we still have to pay them to do their secession. It's a unique case in the world", he said.

In November 2018, the Kosovar Albanian authorities imposed a 100% duty on all products from Serbia and Bosnia by accusing Belgrade of preventing its access to international institutions.

The former Serbian province with a majority Albanian population and a Muslim religion, Kosovo self-proclaimed independence in 2008 - following an armed conflict (1998-1999) that involved NATO intervention against Serbia - but that Belgrade never acknowledged.

On the contrary, the United States and most Western countries have legitimated the independence of Kosovo, where some hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Serbs still live, unlike Russia, China or even five European Union (EU) countries.

On Saturday, David Hale, the US Secretary of State for Political Affairs, visited Pristina to try to get local leaders to repeal or suspend the 100% duty rate, a condition for the resumption of direct dialogue, mediated by the European Union and blocked for several months.

"The United States has a strong influence over the designated Kosovo authorities. Virtually, they have to obey what the Americans order", said Oliver Antić.

"But recently (the Kosovars) adopted some attitudes that displeased the Americans. They are trying to avoid some advice coming from the United States, let's say, but it's more than advice, which has caused this discontent", he added.

Kosovar Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj has recently resisted US calls for the suspension of fees, and said that they will only be eliminated when Belgrade recognizes Kosovo's independence and allows its integration into international organizations.

In response, Serbia has already stated that it will not participate in EU-mediated negotiations until the 100% rate has been lifted. In parallel, Brussels considers that the announced process of accession of Belgrade and Pristina to the Union is dependent on the normalization of their relations.

"I think the US has seen what we are doing and what the Kosovar Albanians are doing. Pristina cannot do what it's doing to the United States. So, let's just say in slow motion, Washington is changing its approach. It cannot be done overnight", stated the diplomat.

"Pristina knows that if they are left alone, it will be the end of the so-called Kosovo government ... It will not be soon, but there are some signs that with the West's pressure on Pristina, particularly the United States, perhaps later this year or so there may be some change in the current status quo", he said.

With the talks blocked, Kosovo's parliament adopted last week a negotiating platform for talks that includes mutual recognition and excludes a possible change in the current borders, which were not well received in Belgrade.

Drawing on his specialization in Law, the Serbian Ambassador recalls all international resolutions and decisions that run counter to Kosovo's independence, but does not preclude any understanding.

"I'm not sure, because our authorities have often said that you cannot have everything. It is not possible, not only by law but also by morality. I'm not sure what will happen in the future", he admitted.

However, there is no doubt that the "Greater Albania" project, which would unify all territories with Albanian populations in the Balkans (Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia) remains active.

"It's an old goal. There are no borders between Kosovo and Albania. And they are not members of the EU. They're raising a new great Albania, of course. But Europe and the United States must see what the Albanians are doing. And so they are always rejecting the commitments that they signed", he said.

"They signed the agreement on the formation of an association of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo, but they do not allow it to be made. And they are always blocking negotiations", he said.

However, the Serbian Ambassador also notes an erratic behavior of Pristina by associating the Kosovar Albanian leaders according to Islamic law, al-Ilhad, non-believers or atheists.

"In Kosovo the al-Ilhad are in power, they do not go to the mosque, they are non-believers. When the President of Turkey (Recep Tayyip Erdogan) was in Kosovo he asked Hashim Thaçi (the President) and the others if they were going to the mosques, and they said no", noted Mr. Oliver Antić.

"Thus, some Islamic States committed a sin against Islam by supporting al-Ilhad, unaware that they were atheists. It is important to underline this, because the Arab and other friend Islamic States were deceived by the Kosovo authorities. And they committed a sin according to Islamic law", he said.