



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

“Working for Democracy and Security”

Serbia and the OSCE: 10 years of Partnership

Secretary General of the OSCE, H.E. Marc Perrin de Brichambaut

Belgrade, 16 May 2011

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

Excellencies,

Ambassador Norkus,

Distinguished participants and Friends of OSCE in Serbia,

Allow me to start by thanking those who have helped to organize today's event – The President of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, Ms. Sonja Licht, and the Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Ambassador Dimitrios Kypreos and his team. This is a very special moment for the OSCE and I am grateful to them for bringing us all together today.

Thank you Minister Dacic for your kind, positive and rewarding words.

I would also like to warmly greet two former heads of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Ambassador Stefano Sannino, who's presence in the EC is of great importance for all of us and Ambassador Hans-Ola Urstad – who continues to assist us from Oslo. I very much look forward to hearing your observations a little later on.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the early 1990s, the OSCE has been active in promoting peace, democracy and prosperity throughout South-Eastern Europe. This engagement began during difficult years of tension and war. Yet from the very beginning, the aim of the OSCE has always been one of consolidating peace and building trust – trust among states and peoples, and trust between citizens and the institutions that represent them.

In many ways, our engagement in the region has defined the modern history of the Organization and shaped how the OSCE looks today. We have focused our work on building partnerships with the authorities of the countries that host our field operations, with civil society and with the local populations. We are proud of what the OSCE has accomplished in this region. We have not acted alone, but rather hand in hand with host countries and in partnership with other regional and international organizations. Our achievements are your achievements, just as the remaining challenges you face are shared by the entire OSCE community.

Today, we mark ten years of OSCE partnership with Serbia, a decade in which we have witnessed much progress in the country. Today, we also reflect on the road ahead and our future cooperation.

In January 2001, the OSCE Permanent Council took the decision to launch a Mission in Belgrade. At that time, the OSCE and the government pledged to work together towards a common goal – the goal of stability, democracy and prosperity. Just two months later, on the 16th of March 2001, the Mission was established, at the time accredited to the Federal

Republic of Yugoslavia. We entered into this challenge together with our close partner, the Council of Europe.

2001, was a difficult year for Serbia, so soon after the country adopted sweeping democratic changes and amidst a very complex situation, within Serbia and regionally. The journey that began with the historic elections of 2000 has not been an easy one. Overcoming the legacy of the past has been a challenging process, not just for Serbia, but for the entire region. The willingness of the local authorities to work in a spirit of co-operation has made the work of the Mission in helping the people of Serbia to face these challenges possible. All former Heads of Mission, I am sure, can testify to this.

As Ambassador Norkus reminded us the Mission continues to work in a close and fruitful partnership with all levels of Serbian society – government, civil society, independent institutions, institutions of higher education, media, national minority communities, and in particular the young people of this country. The Mission is not seen as something extraneous to Serbia, but as a real part of the country and its society. This accomplishment was recognized by President Tadic at the OSCE Summit in Astana last December, where he generously praised the positive role of the OSCE Mission to Serbia. This trust and confidence increases our sense of responsibility.

Minister Dacic has been kind enough to mention the multiple areas of OSCE activity within his remit and beyond it. I thank him for his support and friendship in developing and implementing critical activities. Our co-

operation with his ministry has been exemplary. Therefore I can only refer you to the overview of OSCE activities he provided for us.

The Mission supports the host country in:

- Fighting organized crime;
- Combating corruption;
- Advising on anti-trafficking measures;
- Enhancing parliamentary oversight and the transparency of the National Assembly; and
- Expanding the competencies of local self-government units; and of reform of the criminal justice system.

Let me point out that as a concrete sign of progress in implementing its OSCE commitments, the Mission has been able to phase out its activities in a number of areas and handed over responsibility to local stakeholders to do the job themselves. This is how it should be and we are proud of it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The process of reconciliation provides all-important space to improve further political solidarity and co-operation in the region. In addition, reconciliation and closer co-operation are pre-conditions for improved regional economic development.

In this context, I want to pay tribute to the efforts undertaken recently by Serbia's leadership, and personally by the President himself, in the field of regional co-operation and reconciliation with Serbia's neighbours. The visit to Vukovar last year and the bi-lateral visit to Zagreb in November were

strong signals. These visits and the joint messages delivered together with Croatian President Josipovic have served as a positive example for the rest of the region and beyond.

The Resolution on victims of Srebrenica in the National Assembly was another important milestone, as was the visit to Srebrenica by the President. These steps have demonstrated to the international community just how far modern Serbia has come as a free, democratic society.

Much has been achieved, much more will be done. We hope that in 2011 Serbia can build on its past successes and shows that reforms undertaken have taken root and have opened the way to active negotiations for EU membership.

It is the OSCE's firm intention to remain engaged with the people of Serbia as you continue on your path towards your national aspirations of stability, integration and prosperity. From Vienna the whole Secretariat together with our Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Goran Svilanovic, will be working hard in this perspective.

Finally, I wish to convey my appreciation to the past and present staff of the Mission. I pay tribute to their dedication and their commitment to the task at hand.

I wish you all every success in your future work.

Thank you for your attention.