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STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS OF SRSG,  
Soren Jessen-Petersen,  
delivered by Vesko Garcevic, Ambassador of Serbia and Montenegro,  
at the Permanent Council, February 10, 2005

Mr. Chairman,

Let me start by thanking you for your timely initiative to invite SRSG for Kosovo Mr. Jessen Petersen to the PC meeting today. We highly appreciate Mr. Petersen`s readiness to come to Vienna and share with distinguished delegations at the Permanent Council his evaluation of the current, in our opinion delicate, situation in Kosovo, as well as to inform about the perception of further development in the Province. On behalf of my delegation I would also like to warmly welcome the Head of OMIK, Ambassador Fieschi at today`s PC meeting.

Joint work of the UN, the OSCE and other international actors is crucially important for the success of international involvement in Kosovo. We are confident that problems in the Province could be solved only in the well-coordinated efforts of all interested parties and international community.

We support the efforts of UNMIK to implement its mandate to ensure all necessary preconditions for functional, democratic and multiethnic society in Kosovo. We believe that OMIK has, so far, played significant role in promoting tolerance, reconciliation and democratization within its mandate. We are confident that it still has some place to play an active role in the necessary and genuine decentralization process in the Province. We are acquainted with UNMIK`s efforts that have been made so far in this regard and we support the full implementation of pilot projects on decentralization.

Mr. Chairman,

Our authorities remain committed to the full implementation of the provisions outlined in UNSC Resolution 1244. Furthermore, allow me to highlight the fact that Serbia and Montenegro has made tremendous endeavors in order to accomplish its part of the complex mission in accordance with Resolution 1244. Subsequently, we stand ready to work together with UNMIK as a very reliable partner in a spirit of true

partnership. Belgrade also reiterates its readiness, expressed recently once again by Mr. Nebojsa Covic, the Head of the Serbian Coordination Centre for Kosovo, to resume dialogue with Pristina. Furthermore, the intention of President of Serbia, Mr. Boris Tadic, to visit Kosovo is yet another good sign of political will in this regard.

While we fully support efforts of the international community to bring democratic values to Kosovo, we are disappointed to see that the developments prior and after the elections in October have not eliminated a great Serbs` concern that equitable institutional protection for all ethnic communities have not yet been achieved. We hope that ongoing reconstruction of the damaged Serb houses, schools and Orthodox churches will include more than simply refurbishment of the destroyed property. Unfortunately, everyday life shows that democratic and multiethnic society in the Province is still far away. Human rights and security conditions for Serbs and other non-Albanians are still difficult. The car explosion of one of the Kosovo Serbs leaders, Oliver Ivanovic, who participated in the Parliamentary elections in Kosovo, is yet another example that security is fragile in the Province. Freedom of movement for members of minority communities, particularly Kosovo Serbs, remain restricted, while their property rights are disrespected. At the same time, despite of the progress made during the last several months, the culture of impunity for the perpetrators of the ethnically motivated crimes is still an alarming phenomenon. Such a complex environment has recently been even more troubled by the decision of the Kosovo Energy Corporation to cut off the supply of electricity to Kosovo-Serb villages. In spite of Belgrade`s offer to do services of their power utility, a considerable number of men, women and children have been without electricity in harsh winter conditions for more than a month now.

We regret that the composition of the new Government of Kosovo didn`t help a lot to clear up the given situation nor to relax the relation among the main ethnical groups in the Province. As it is pointed out in the Conclusion of the Serbian Government, the ongoing reconciliation and negotiation process can`t be carried out by those who are not broadly respectful and dignified actors and don`t enjoy confidence of all the ethnical groups living in Kosovo, especially if they are representing highest authorities of PISG.

Mr. Chairman,

It is a firm belief of the Serbian Government that in these circumstances we are far from any discussions about the final status. On the contrary, we believe that more remains to be done until the prerequisites for the full participation of Serbs in upcoming process is attained. We are confident that decentralization based on the proposal of the Government of the Republic of Serbia can ensure necessary environment for sustainable return of IDP-s and better living conditions for Serbs and other ethnical groups which is, allow me to reiterate, a corner stone of the entire process aimed at building a democratic and multiethnic Kosovo.

In its substance, we support “standards implementation policy”. There is no durable solution without a broad scope of democratic standards rooted in the Kosovo’s society. At the same time, the modern European history clearly shows that democratic transition is a rather long, multiform process and its essence is, no doubt, more than an act of political will. In such a sensitive and complex task to find an adequate solution for Kosovo, all relevant views, especially the position of Belgrade, have to be seriously taken into consideration if we want to achieve a real sustainable result. A comprehensive and thorough evaluation of the standards achieved is a critical point on that way. Any premature and hasty assessment that doesn’t fully esteem complexity of the mentioned environment, may produce further disputes.

European perspective for Kosovo, the ultimate goal that we all share, implies a democratic, multiethnic society, protection of human rights, ethnical, cultural and religious diversities, decentralisation, democratisation and rule of law in accordance with high European core standards. Therefore, we want to believe that the upcoming period will be marked by more decisive and effective action by all the actors involved if we want to have a progress attained regarding the mentioned outstanding issues. This is of particular importance in areas under clear responsibility of international community. Having in mind this, we sincerely wish SRSJ Jessen-Petersen and his dedicated team all the success in a really challenging and delicate time ahead.

Mr. Chairman,

In concluding, allow me to dedicate a few words to Ambassador Fieschi, as this is his last appearance in the PC. In last three difficult years, OMIK, under able and skillful Fieschi’s leadership has played an important and

promising role in Kosovo. No doubt, this period is marked by Ambassador Fieschi's significant, personal endeavors aimed at accelerating democratization and reconciliation in Kosovo. Ambassador, on behalf of my delegation, let me express the appreciation for close and conducive cooperation we have had so far and wish you all the best in the future.