

Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe



Délégation du Canada auprès de
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération
en Europe

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**Delegation of Canada to the OSCE
Response to the statement of Dr. Nebojša Čović
President of the Coordination Centre of
Serbia and Montenegro and the Republic
of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija
549th Plenary Permanent Council
07 April 2005**

ENGLISH only

Mr. Chairman,

Canada welcomes Dr. Nebojša Čović, President of the Coordination Centre of Serbia and Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his presentation today.

Canada follows progress in Kosovo with great interest and encourages ongoing efforts to build a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo. This is a common goal that we believe is shared by all the participating States of the OSCE. Canada endorses a strong international engagement in Kosovo and actively supports the work of the OSCE, the United Nations and NATO in furthering this common objective.

This year will be a seminal year for the future of Kosovo. As the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Mr. Jessen-Peterson, stated before the OSCE Permanent Council in early February, “there will be no...automaticity”. Canada notes the recent report submitted by Mr. Jessen-Petersen to the United Nations Security Council, which provides a useful overview of the situation in Kosovo, underlining both progress achieved and outstanding challenges to be overcome. A full evaluation of progress made in the implementation of the standards should be completed in 2005, for the purpose of determining the future status of Kosovo.

Implementation of Standards in Kosovo

Some encouraging progress on the implementation of the standards has been achieved in the last few months. However, much remains to be done, in particular with regard to the return of internally displaced persons and refugees and to ensure security and freedom of movement for the Serbs and other minorities. It is very important that the government of Kosovo accelerate its efforts to implement the standards, with a view to establishing a credible basis for a positive mid-2005 review.

A substantial dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is particularly important to address the very serious challenges Kosovo and its people are facing. In this regard, Canada welcomes the meeting of the Working Group on Missing Persons that took place recently in Belgrade. We see this meeting as a first step towards a sustained, constructive and necessary dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

We also call on Kosovo Serbs to participate in the institutions of Kosovo. Their participation in the political process is the best way for Kosovo Serbs to make their voice heard, to promote their legitimate concerns and to contribute to shaping the future of Kosovo.

We urge the Provisional Institutions for Self Government (PISG) to embrace minority communities at all levels, by addressing more vigorously their security concerns and guaranteeing their safe participation in public life.

Canada recognises that progress has been made to encourage minority participation in Kosovo society. We welcome the recently concluded MoU between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the PISG for the reconstruction of religious sites in Kosovo.

Canada further welcomes the restructuring of the South Serbia Coordination Body in March to include members of minority communities.

We believe firmly that full and unconditional cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) remains an essential requirement for all governments in the region. All members of the International Community have an obligation and responsibility to help the countries of the region fulfill this obligation.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Canada thanks Dr. Čović again for his stimulating presentation to the Permanent Council today.