



**STATEMENT BY MS. MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
AMBASSADOR OF SERBIA,
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS OF
AMBASSADOR MIROSLAV LAJČAK,
HIGH REPRESENTATIVE AND EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA,
AT THE 683rd MEETING
OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 October 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me on behalf of the delegation of Serbia to welcome Ambassador Miroslav Lajčak as High Representative and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Permanent Council and thank him for his address.

As a signatory and guarantor of the Dayton Agreement Serbia is fully committed to the implementation of all its provisions and components and has proved this commitment convincingly. It was the Dayton Agreement - with all its provisions and components - which brought peace after a horrendous war and essentially contributed to stabilizing not only Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the whole region, affected by the war.

For Serbia, it is the first and foremost priority to maintain and even enhance this achieved stability, all the more since we find ourselves in the midst of a very sensitive and delicate process on resolving another key issue for the stability in the region – the Kosovo status. It is obvious that any crisis situation in one of our neighbouring countries will represent an environment detrimental to this process evolving smoothly towards a peaceful outcome. Any rise of tensions in the region will have repercussions on an already tense process.

Mr. Chairman,

Serbia has always considered the support of the international community in establishing peace, democracy and the rule of law in our region as useful and in many ways essential. We are very well aware that peace-building in the Western Balkans is a highly complex and demanding task, which, among others, requires profound knowledge of the past and present, sure instinct, much patience and a deep psychological understanding of the manifold relations existing in the region.

Allow me at this point to make a personal observation. Whenever I talked to people from the region in the past years, people of any nationality, who displayed a defiant and stubborn or dismissive attitude towards “the others”, I could often discover a deep rooted fear behind the hostile mindset. Sometimes this fear was irrational and unfounded, based on a lack of knowledge of “the others”, on engrained bias and traditional stereotypes - or simply on essential disinformation. Sometimes, however, and maybe more often, the fear had a real background of cruel and tragic experiences of the war. What I want to say is that people in the Balkans are not defiant and hostile by nature, but by virtue of particular circumstances. The most urgent task still to be carried out in many parts of our region is to heal the wounds, to inform properly and to restore confidence in an all-encompassing way, starting at the grass-roots level, to inspire people with trust that they can rely on each other and cooperate. Apply this formula to any country in the region and you will have a success story.

We wish Ambassador Lajčák sincerely the best and real success in his endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman