



ENGLISH only

**STATEMENT BY MS. MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
AMBASSADOR OF SERBIA,
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND,
H.E. MR BERTIE AHERN,
AT THE 31ST JOINT SPECIAL MEETING OF
THE FORUM FOR SECURITY COOPERATION
AND THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 February 2008

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Serbia I would like to warmly welcome the Prime Minister of Ireland, H.E. Mr Bertie Ahern, to this Joint Special Meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Permanent Council. We thank the Prime Minister for his address that showed a thorough knowledge of this organization and the fundamental norms that govern it – and us, the participating States.

Mr. Chairman,

Since democratic forces overthrew the Milosevic regime in the year 2000, Serbia enthusiastically embraced the values and principles of democracy and embarked upon a thorough reform process which should eventually lead her to the final destination – to become a proud member of and party to the most successful peace project in history – the European Union. I remember very well that in 2006, while searching for the best solutions and practises in reaching the much sought-after final destination, our government suddenly came up with a magic word, and that was – Ireland. It turned out that the National Strategy for Employment, which was presented to the public at that time, had been modelled on the extraordinary Irish economic success story of the eighties and nineties that turned Ireland into a prosperous society and a vision for countries struggling with high unemployment and poor economic conditions. The “Irish miracle”, as it was called in Serbia, soon became the subject of a lively public debate on whether this miracle can be applied to Serbia or not and what was the actual secret recipe for its accomplishment. The debate mirrored the enthusiasm and energy with which the Serbian society was looking for the best way to reach its final destination.

At the same period of time as it discussed the “Irish miracle” and with the same enthusiasm and energy and belief in democratic principles and values Serbia – the authorities and the public – engaged in the negotiating process on the status of its southern province of Kosovo. The Serbian negotiating team offered more than 400

amendments to the Ahtisaari Plan. It offered, within the Troika Process, practical, contemporary solutions as they are exercised in Hong Kong, the Åland Islands, the Basque Country or in South Tyrol – and more than that. The Serbian negotiating team – and with it the Serbian public – believed in the power of arguments, in the effectiveness of discourse and dialogue, it truly and deeply believed in the necessity to come to an agreement with the Kosovo Albanians, to a historic reconciliation of people sharing the same territory and an eventful history that can only be overcome and finally settled by a solution committed to crucial contemporary European values and principles of agreement and concord.

None of the Serbian status proposals was ever discussed seriously or even taken into consideration as worthy of a serious discussion. The sentence was passed long beforehand, without a court procedure, beyond all existing laws, and executed on the 17th of February this year under the euphemistic labelling of a CDI – a coordinated declaration of independence.

If anyone wanted to harm democracy in Serbia – he or she could not have found a better way to do that than to promote and execute the fundamentally and thoroughly undemocratic act of a CDI. Every single recognition of the heartland of Serbia as an independent state by a democratic country is a stab in the heart of every true democrat in Serbia. It hurts, as Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic concluded last week before this august body. Yes, it hurts!

I can also be less pathetic – Serbia declared the illegal unilateral declaration of independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina null and void, since it grossly violates the basic principles of international law, including the Helsinki Final Act and its provisions not only on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states, but also those on conflict-resolution, peace-building and the settlement of disputes by negotiations and by agreement. Instead of doing our best to enhance prosperity and unity for the benefit of us all, we now have growing discord and more dividing lines – in Serbia, including Kosovo, in the Balkans, in Europe, in the world.

We now don't need an "Irish miracle", but a Northern Irish one, as it was described so impressively by the distinguished Prime Minister.

Mr. Chairman,

We wish the Prime Minister of Ireland, his country and its people the very best for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman