



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SERBIA,
UNDER CURRENT ISSUES
AT THE 755th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
ON KOSOVO/ SERBIA**

19 March 2009

Madame Chair,

On behalf of the delegation of Serbia I would like to bring to the attention of the distinguished Permanent Council that two days ago, on 17 March, Serbia commemorated the 5th anniversary of the 2004 March pogrom against the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija. About the orchestrated 36 hours-attack of more than 50.000 Kosovo-Albanians on everything that is Serbian in Kosovo President Boris Tadić said on Tuesday:

“Five years after the pogrom against Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija there is still no safety, no freedom of movement, no justice, no electricity, no water, nor the respect of the elementary norms of civilization. The March violence left 19 people dead and 950 injured, more than 4000 Serbs were expelled from their homes, 900 houses were destroyed, 35 Christian monasteries and churches were burned and blown up, among them cultural monuments of inestimable value from the 14th and 16th century. Even after five years the culprits for this organized violence have not been punished.”

President Tadić also called upon the representatives of UNMIK and EULEX to ensure that justice be accessible for everyone in Kosovo, irregardless of his or her ethnic or religious affiliation.

Madame Chair,

If we look around the globe today or back to history we have to recognize that we do not perceive and treat people suffering in an equal manner. There are worthy and unworthy victims in the sense of the appreciation and attention we address to them. Among Serbs in Kosovo there is a very strong and certain feeling that their

plight is downplayed or simply ignored: suffering Kosovo-Albanians are worthier than suffering Kosovo-Serbs. This is what they have first-hand experience of.

On 17 March this year 8000 Serbs were without electricity in Kosovo. Several hundred Serbs, Roma and Ashkali from the village of Plemetina close to Obilić went on a protest march, because their electricity had been turned off by the Kosovo Energy Corporation for 16 days. There were electricity cuts throughout February and March in other Serbian and Roma villages and settlements in Kosovo, a harassment with serious humanitarian implications. At the same time a Kosovo-Albanian, who had been already convicted to 40 years of prison for blowing up a bus with Serbs in 2001, when 12 people died, was acquitted in an appeals procedure. Eight years after this cowardly assault the perpetrators are still at large. This kind of impunity applies to the overwhelming majority of crimes committed against Serbs in Kosovo.

As regards the March 2004 pogrom, last year's report of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo "Four Years Later" assessed the comprehensive failure of the Kosovo Criminal Justice System to prosecute and punish the perpetrators and those responsible for the crimes committed. Instead of sending resolute signals to all people living in Kosovo that no crime will go unpunished, some stakeholders changed the political approach to the Kosovo issue after the March 2004 pogrom. The demand to implement the necessary human rights standards before talking about the status was given up in favour of a policy of standards after status, the standards never having been implemented.

On March 17 President Tadić reiterated that Serbia will never recognize the illegal independence of Kosovo and that she will defend her sovereignty and territorial integrity by peaceful, diplomatic and legal means, and he called upon the United Nations to fulfill their mandate.

Thank you, Madame Chair