



**STATEMENT BY MS. MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
AMBASSADOR OF SERBIA,
ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
“INTERNATIONAL STEERING GROUP FOR KOSOVO”,
AT THE 704th MEETING OF
THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 March 2008

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Serbia would like to draw the attention of the distinguished Permanent Council to the fact that the Republic of Serbia strongly objects to the establishment of the so-called “International Steering Group for Kosovo” (ISG) on 28 February in Vienna, composed of fifteen countries, all of them participating States of the OSCE.

In their statement published after the first meeting of the group, the states involved outline that “they have recognised, or expressed (their) firm intention to recognise soon, the independence of Kosovo in line with the recommendations of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari”. Further, the states involved inform in this statement that they have appointed Mr. Pieter Faith to be the International Civilian Representative (ICR) for Kosovo, who “will have certain responsibilities and powers, as outlined in Annex IX of the Ahtisaari Plan, to help him supervise Kosovo’s fulfilment of its obligations under that plan”. Besides that, we are informed that Mr. Faith will as of the 28 February “establish under his authority an International Civilian Office (ICO) to assist him in fulfilling his mandate”.

In their common statement the countries involved “call on Kosovo’s leaders to take immediate steps to implement fully the Ahtisaari Plan” and “welcome the Kosovo Assembly’s prompt approval of the priority legislation called for in the Ahtisaari Plan”.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to point out emphatically that none of these activities, mandates, intentions and purposes of the “International Steering Group”, the “International Civilian Representative”, the “International Civilian Office” or similar structures have any legal basis or legitimacy whatsoever without a proper decision of the United Nations Security Council.

Moreover, they are, “inconsistent with, *inter alia*, the principles of the United Nations Charter, Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), and the Helsinki Final Act”, as is referred to by Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic in his letter of 29 February to the Secretary General of the United Nations, distributed to the delegations on Tuesday.

In this letter the Minister recalls that resolution 1244 unambiguously reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – of which the Republic of Serbia is the sole successor – and that its text plainly includes the province of Kosovo and Metohija within the borders of our country.

Let me remind you, Mr. Chairman, that resolution 1244, up to the 17 February, was *unambiguously* accepted and treated as the guardian of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia by all 192 member states of the United Nations. Had it not been so, no unilateral declaration of independence – and the recognition of it – would have been necessary.

Hence, the Group of 15 countries as well as the structures created by it clearly operate in violation of this resolution while undertaking unilateral steps and actions aimed at enforcing a unilateral independence of the South Serbian province. In this regard let me also and once again remind you that the Ahtisaari Proposal is, as its name says, a proposal which has never been agreed upon, much less endorsed by either the United Nations Security Council or the Republic of Serbia, the subject of the sovereignty over Kosovo.

Mr. Chairman,

International law consists of rules and principles which govern the relations and dealings of nations with each other, it binds together nation-states in adherence to recognized values and standards, and the United Nations Security Council is the organ of the United Nations charged with the maintenance of international law, peace and security. To operate in circumvention of this authority and the parameters of international law is setting a bad example for future international relations and security, to put it politely. Democracy is ill served by arbitrariness and the absence of law-abiding behaviour.

For Serbia, a small state, international law and the United Nations are, as they are for many other small states, the protectors of their rights. Therefore Serbia continues to consider the unilateral declaration of independence to be illegal and resolution 1244 in its full, proper and only possible reading to be in force. Accordingly, the only legal international civilian presence in Kosovo is UNMIK, under the umbrella of which the OSCE Mission is operating. And, accordingly, we

strongly object any attempt of a possible cooperation of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo with any of the above mentioned structures that are mandated only by themselves.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me assure you that the Republic of Serbia will not cease to call on all actors to resume negotiations and dialogue in order to search for an agreed settlement with regard to the Kosovo status. Negotiations are only exhausted – and only then -, when you find an agreed solution.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman