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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS

VIENNA

Vienna, 17 July 2008

Statement

of the Albanian Ambassador Gilbert Galanxhi

at the 722 Permanent Council Meeting

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

The Albanian Delegation joins the other Delegations in warmly welcoming in the Permanent Council His Excellency Minister Bernard Kouchner – very highly esteemed and respected by the Albanian people for his unmistakable vision and great contribution for long-term peace and stability in South-Western Balkans.

Please allow me Your Excellency, Minister Kouchner, that on behalf of the Albanian Government to thank You personally, as well as Your Government, for the continued support that Your country and the EU are giving to my country, Albania, on our way to full integration into the EU structures, the very top priority

and strategic goal for the Albanian Government and Albanian political class as a whole.

Mr. Minister Kouchner,

Albania is decisively committed to fulfill each and every requirement that derives from this strategic goal, especially in the areas of electoral reform and judicial reform, which constitute the two pillars of paramount importance that will cement the achievements obtained so far in the other areas, such as: the rule of law, fight against organized crime, integrated border management, police reform, freedom of media, social and economic development, etc. We are conscious that we have a lot of persistent work to do; just as we are conscious that, now, we have a much clearer vision for our Euro-Atlantic future. The signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with EU, as well as of the Adherence Protocol with NATO, constitutes two major milestones on the way of integration and cooperation with our Euro-Atlantic partners.

The Albanian Government strongly believes that, now, it is high time for good qualitative engagements and commitments by both sides: the Albanian one and the International Community. Having noticed that the priorities of the French EU Presidency are fully in line with the priorities of the Finish OSCE Presidency, we really look forward to qualitative guidance, assistance and monitoring by our Euro-Atlantic partners; at the same time we guarantee them for our unequivocal commitment and dedication to comply with the required standards. The two-digit economical growth that Albania is experiencing and foreseen even for next year is a clear example of the very fruitful cooperation with our international partners, as well as of the seriousness and hard work of the Albanian government and administration. We are determined to pursue on the way of reforms, as we have

done so far, and we highly appreciate the support and contribution of EU and OSCE even for the future. Reforms and only reforms will make Albania leave behind the long transition phase and become a functioning modern democracy.

Mr. Chairman,

Taking advantage of the presence of our distinguished guest, Minister Kouchner, I would like to bring to the attention of both 'F' Presidencies – Finish and French – that the Albanian people have suffered so much from the horrors of communist dictatorship and isolation, that the freedom of movement is viewed as some very precious jewel stolen from them for half a century. Albania would sincerely appreciate your committed attention to this issue, since I believe that it is in the interest and under the commitments of both organizations, EU and OSCE, to move forward and really cement the confidence that we all share for Democracy.

Albanians had viewed democracy from the 'prison tower' of communism. Now that the 'prison tower' is not there anymore, the aspiration of the Albanian people is to 'touch' democracy and not 'view' it. I assure you that Albanians are good citizens, hard workers and tolerant contributors to the very best values of every society. I assure you that the full liberalization of visa regime will bring us all to a satisfactory 'win – win' situation.

Mr. Minister Kouchner,

Simply, I could not continue further on without thanking wholeheartedly the Euro-Atlantic friends of Kosova for organizing the Kosova Donors Conference last week. This was the highest and noblest expression of solidarity with a martyr people, who bravely tries to forget the non-too-distant past in order to build a

prosperous democratic future. For this reason, the Albanian Government deeply believes that the presence of OSCE and EULEX in Kosova is indispensable and of vital importance; the people of Kosova – Albanian and non-Albanian – will definitively be the immediate beneficiaries, whereas the whole region and beyond will be the long-term beneficiary.

Last but not least, I wish our distinguished guest Minister Kouchner every success, good luck and *bon courage* during these 6 challenging months of the French Presidency; the same goes for our distinguished friend and colleague, Ambassador Lebedel.

Thank you Mr. Chairman