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**STATEMENT BY MS. MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
AMBASSADOR OF SERBIA,
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS OF
THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE,
H.E. BERNARD KOUCHNER,
AT THE 722nd MEETING OF
THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 July 2008

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the delegation of Serbia, I should like to warmly welcome to the Permanent Council H.E. Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, on the occasion of the French Presidency of the European Council. Let me also thank him for his inspiring address.

Mr. Chairman,

The idea behind the union of European Nation States was and is the desire to end divisions, to acquire mutual respect, to provide for prosperity and security of its citizens and for a lasting peace on the European continent by building confidence and resolving conflicts through dialogue. These are the core values also of this organization, and the Republic of Serbia is deeply committed to them - and will remain so.

After the Parliamentary elections held on 11 May this year, which were assessed by the international election observers as “a display of a mature democracy in action”, the new government of the Republic of Serbia was constituted on 7 July. The key elements of the new government’s programme, to which all members of the coalition agreed, are: the commitment to a European future of Serbia; the rejection of the independence of Kosovo; the strengthening of the economy of the country and of the social responsibility of the Government; fight against corruption and organized crime; and the respect of international law.

In accordance with this programme and the principles and values our country is committed to, one of the new government’s major priorities is Serbia’s full membership in the European Union. In order to reach this goal and full

compliance with the standards of the European Union, the Republic of Serbia will continue and accelerate the reform process that started seven years ago and is efficiently supported, among others, by the OSCE Mission in Belgrade.

Showing its strong commitment to the European future of Serbia, the government submitted, only a week after its constitution, the Stabilization and Association Agreement for ratification to the National Assembly, which convened yesterday for an extraordinary session and will continue its debate today. To get the candidate status for the accession to the European Union as soon as possible, the new government announced also the endorsement of the Action Plan.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, the new government expressed its firm position on the continuity of the state policy with regard to Kosovo. This means that Serbia will never accept the independence of the South Serbian Province and that all state institutions and the government will unite in undertaking all legal and diplomatic measures to preserve Kosovo as a part of Serbia. This means, as well, that Serbia continues to consider the so-called constitution of the “Republic of Kosovo” null and void as well as all documents and acts based on it, since they are in contravention of the United Nations Charter, the basic principles of international law, the UNSCR 1244 and the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia.

In this context, the government of the Republic of Serbia accepts the provisions and the spirit of the SAA and its compliance with the state policy with regard to Kosovo, having in mind in particular the fact that the issue of the status of Kosovo is mentioned in article 135 of the SAA, which explicitly refers to resolution 1244.

With respect to the international civilian presence in Kosovo, it is essential that the OSCE Mission performs its activities strictly in accordance with its mandate and resolution 1244, as a distinct component of UNMIK. Regarding the announcement of new models of civilian presences in Kosovo, the government of Serbia is ready to engage in finding an appropriate framework and a legal basis for them through the mechanisms of the United Nations. Let me underline, however, that no civilian presence can be aimed at implementing the Ahtisaari plan, since this plan was not endorsed by the United Nations Security Council or the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Serbia strictly respects international law and complies with its international commitments, and expects others to do so, as well. In this regard allow me to underline that the Government of the Republic of Serbia is ready to cooperate with the ICTY. However, it insists that all crimes are treated equally, which means that there can be no less worthy victims or privileged perpetrators.

Law must be equal for all. This applies also to international law. Our firm conviction is that the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty, among others, cannot be valid for some countries, and for others not. Neither can this be the case with the principles of peaceful conflict-resolution that require dialogue until a compromise is found and concord is reached.

In concluding Mr. Chairman, allow me to wish Minister Kouchner and France the very best for a successful EU-Presidency.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman