

“Serbia and the Promise of Europe”

ENGLISH only

Address to
the Permanent Council of
the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Council,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and privilege to set with you this afternoon. At the outset, I wish to congratulate Spain for the dynamic start to its chairmanship-in-office. And I would like to express the hope that the successful and active cooperation between the Republic of Serbia and the OSCE will continue in the years to come. A fine example was the visit by our Chief of General Staff Lt. General Zdravko Ponoš to the OSCE last week.

Today I hope to outline for you the Republic of Serbia’s position on a number of current issues of interest to the OSCE. But first, I want to share with you, at the beginning of my remarks, a sense of pride at being the first Foreign Minister of the Republic of Serbia to address this audience. My country, in a way, symbolizes both the continuity and change of the past several decades—a continuity and change that the OSCE itself has experienced. In a way, then, both Serbia and the OSCE have been barometers of change in Europe.

My country—then one of six constituent republics of socialist Yugoslavia—played a crucial role in advancing what began in Helsinki more than 30 years ago—a process whose first stage culminated in the signing of what remains a fundamental tenet of the international system, the Helsinki Final Act.

At the time, our delegation was universally recognized as having been a bridge between the often intractable positions of East and West. We helped bring the two blocks closer together—we acted as an honest broker, and played a crucial role in the successful beginnings of a process that led, a decade and a half later, to the end of the Cold War.

At the July 1975 CSCE Helsinki Conference, my country gained recognition for our principled approach to finding a compromise solution—a compromise solution that would advance the agenda of peace, security and cooperation in Europe. That recognition came in the form of being awarded the honor to host the First CSCE Follow-up Meeting in Belgrade.

My country worked hard to provide a platform in which “improving security, developing cooperation in Europe, and developing the process of *détente* in the future”—as the Belgrade Concluding Document stated—could be advanced.

The Belgrade Meeting enabled the CSCE process to go forward and not stagnate. It preserved the momentum and placed the CSCE on firmer, healthier ground. It reaffirmed the principle of the sovereign equality of states. It established a solemn obligation for the Helsinki signatories to give each other an accounting of their compliance with *all* the provisions of Helsinki, including—crucially—the human rights provisions. And it therefore became the bridge of continuity between what was achieved at Helsinki, and what came afterwards.

Recently I read the 1978 internal report that was compiled by my Foreign Ministry in the wake of the Belgrade Follow-up Meeting. I was stunned to find reference to—quote—the eventual promise of Europe—end quote—in its pages. Stunned because it called to mind the words of the American Secretary of State, George Shultz, marking the tenth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, in 1985. There he spoke of “the promise of Helsinki and the larger promise of European history.” And stunned because it seems to me that the writer of this report somehow understood that if the Helsinki Final Act were implemented in its entirety, the Cold War would be no longer.

The Wall has come down and our resolve has been confirmed by our actions. The doctrine of limited sovereignty has been relegated to the dustbin of history. Great enemies have forsworn war as a means of solving problems and conflicts. Unimaginable prosperity shapes the lives of hundreds of millions of Europeans living in peace and security. The respect for human rights is at an all-time high. And democracy has been consolidated as the values of Europe have become entrenched throughout the OSCE space.

In short, Ladies and Gentlemen, the promise of Europe is coming to pass. I sincerely believe that very shortly, Europe will be—for the first time in its long history—truly whole, permanently free, and forever at peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OSCE represents a unique forum in which participating states can define and explain their positions on various issues in the context of the broader European security agenda.

I carry with me the Government of the Republic of Serbia’s deep commitment to the standards and values inherent in the OSCE as defined in 1975 and 1990, and reaffirmed in the Charter for European Security in 1999: the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, economic and environmental co-operation, the inviolability of internationally-recognized borders, and the maintenance of peace and stability in Europe. We all share these interwoven democratic values, values that Serbia proudly promotes in its current capacity as the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The Government of Serbia highly appreciates the contribution of the OSCE to the ongoing process of reform and democratization in our country, particularly when it comes to police and judicial reform, rule of law consolidation efforts, defense reform, and media-related issues. As such, we greatly value the work of the OSCE’s Missions in Belgrade and Pristina.

We welcome the ongoing process of reform, as well as efforts to improve the OSCE's performance and increase its relevance. In that context, I have no doubt that the OSCE could increase the already significant role it plays in international efforts against terrorism. Our Government is committed to continue actively engaging in the fight against all sorts of new security threats and challenges.

I would like to emphasize that Serbia's National Assembly has passed close to 400 laws since the return of democracy to our country on October 5th, 2000—laws designed to bring our legislative framework more fully in line with European Union and OSCE standards. That is why we have been committed to the harmonization of our legislation with the *acquis communautaire* since 2003—even before the Stabilization and Association Agreement is signed, something we expect to do by the end of this year. With the election of a majority coalition government earlier this year, we are able to pledge the re-doubling of our efforts to ensure that the process of reform becomes truly irreversible.

Let me be absolutely clear: rapid EU accession is the Government of Serbia's fundamental priority.

And I believe that this is the case with every other national government in the region. We are committed to cooperate with each other because we understand that we are all in this boat together.

An essential tool in furthering regional cooperation is reconciliation—a fundamental European value.

This brings me to the Hague—more specifically, to the Government of Serbia's clear political will to fully cooperate with the ICTY.

All indictees still at-large must be located, they all must be arrested, and they all must be handed over to the Hague.

We have very good regional cooperation on this and other fronts. All the governments in the region are truly eager to consolidate the European idea of democracy, the institutions that flow from it, the cooperation they entail, and the values that are its foundation.

In pursuit of fuller regional cooperation, the Republic of Serbia has consistently advocated the strengthening of cooperation between the region's OSCE Missions. The Palić, Ohrid and Sarajevo Processes are perfect examples of how the OSCE can assist countries to solve issues that are by their very nature regional in scope—and that, as such, require solutions that are *themselves* regional.

We do not believe that the Sarajevo Process—to which we attach particular importance—has been completed. This important regional question requires not only a regional answer, but also the continuing active involvement of the three international stakeholders to the Sarajevo Process: the UNHCR, the EU, and of course the OSCE. We firmly believe that the three plus one OSCE Field Missions therefore must remain engaged.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have spoken of the need for reconciliation in the context of the Western Balkans. I want to turn now to the need for reconciliation *within* Serbia. Serbs and Albanians have gone through a period of tragic conflict in Kosovo—and there are those who believe that the time is not yet ripe for reconciliation. I wholeheartedly reject such a position in the name of the very values that unite all the countries present in this room.

I do not say that reconciliation will be easy, but I do say that few sincere, coordinated efforts have been invested in its eventual success. The most obvious example of this was the failure to reach a compromise solution during the Vienna negotiation process led by the former President of Finland, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari.

I believe that there is no credible alternative to a mutually-acceptable solution to the future status of Kosovo, and I believe that the way forward lies in coming together in an atmosphere of true European brotherhood, reconciliation, flexibility and compromise.

We ask for the support of the OSCE. We reaffirm our belief that an important component in this process is much closer cooperation and coordination between the OSCE Mission in Belgrade and OMIK in Pristina.

The OSCE has a role to play in the new negotiations. Concretely, this means working harder with both sides and the rest of the international community to sustainably return more than 200,000 Kosovo Serb and Roma IDPs to the province. It means building on the success of the establishment of a multiethnic police force in Southern Serbia. And it means working together in the fight to combat organized crime and terrorism. But most importantly, it means helping both sides to confront the legacy of the 1990s, for the demonization and caricature of the Other is no way forward. The time has come to tear down the exclusivist mythologies of the past.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to close with the words of our Prime Minister, Dr. Vojislav Kostunica, addressing the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the OSCE on November 27th 2000 as the then President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—quick on the heels of our readmission to the OSCE.

Stressing that our country had been a founder of the CSCE, President Kostunica emphasized that the “firm guarantees of the inviolability of borders, contained in the Helsinki Final Act, are still a necessity. Ethnic conflicts,” he added, must be “resolved through dialogue between the communities concerned. Any solution imposed from the outside is burdened with the danger of tackling the problem only superficially. That is why,” President Kostunica concluded, “I advocate an open Serb-Albanian dialogue.”

In the year 2000, President Kostunica’s call for dialogue was met only with silence. Let us not repeat the mistakes of yesterday. Heed me when I say to you that my country is ready, truly ready, for dialogue—for dialogue conducted in the spirit of the values of the OSCE.

The only way forward is to begin—to begin in earnest—a negotiating process that has no pre-determined outcome, a negotiation process on the future status of Kosovo that gives dialogue and reconciliation pride of place.

The alternative approach, namely one that imposes the independence of Kosovo against the will of the democratic leadership of Serbia, and that does so without being sanctioned by the United Nations, cannot be allowed to stand. The imposed independence of Kosovo is nothing other than the forced partition of Serbia. That is why imposing independence would directly affect a fundamental tenet of the OSCE and the international system—not just the Western Balkans.

A Pandora's Box of ethnic and sectarian problems would be opened. Throughout the world, existing conflicts could escalate, frozen conflicts could reignite, and new ones could be instigated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I firmly believe that we all share the same goal in the Western Balkans: the achievement of a solution to Kosovo's future status that promotes the consolidation of democratic values and institutions. A solution that promotes the economic transformation of the Western Balkans and the security architecture of all of Europe.

And I firmly believe that all of us here present—representatives of signatory countries of the Helsinki Final Act—support a solution that conforms to the values and the language of the Act itself.

I want to reassure you that, in searching for such a solution, Belgrade will spare no effort.

It has to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia in line with the values that bind us to one another. And it must enable the Kosovo Albanians to satisfy their legitimate demand for substantial self-governance.

I say to you that Serbia wants to be a part of a *European* solution, not a part of a *Balkan* problem. We are committed to forging a lasting, secure peace. And we would like to see an absolute commitment from *all* sides to the peaceful resolution of this issue. We need to commit to peace before we can make peace.

That is how we will fulfill the promise of Europe.

Thank you very much.