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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS

VIENNA

S T A T E M E N T

***by Mr. Artan Canaj, Deputy Head of Mission of Albania,
at the 756th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council***

Vienna, 26 March 2009

Madam Chair,

I took the floor simply to bring to your attention a few historical truths with regards to the newest state within our OSCE space, which until now has been officially recognized by the majority of the OSCE member states, i.e. Kosova.

March 24th marks the 10th anniversary of the International Community's intervention in Kosova for putting an end to the gross abuses and violations of human rights and freedoms, for putting an end to the severest genocide and war crimes committed by Milosevic's regime against the Albanian population of Kosova, which were justly considered as the gravest in Europe after the World War II. I am recalling these truths with the only purpose that they be not repeated in the future to any nation or people.

- More than 11 thousand Albanian civilians were executed by the paramilitary and military Serbian forces (mostly children, women, the elderly, sick and others);
- More than 4 thousand Albanian civilians were missing – and more than 2 thousand civilians are still missing today, the moment we are speaking;

- More than 500 massive graves have been discovered during and after the war;
- More than 200 thousand Albanian houses, schools, hospitals as well as cultural, historic and religious places were totally destroyed;
- More than 1 million civilians were forced to leave Kosova in only two weeks, and find shelter in the friendly immediate neighboring countries: Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia, Turkey, as well as in many other friendly countries; and I can not continue further without thanking all these countries wholeheartedly for their support and very humane respond to this 'biblical exodus' as it was justly named.

At the same time, I wish to thank all the states which participated in this Liberation Intervention. This intervention was indispensable, if such step had not been undertaken, the consequences of genocide and war atrocities could have been fatal and much worse.

Ten years after, we all can be proud that the right decision was taken on 24th of March 1999.

It is more than a year now that the new reality, the independent Republic of Kosova, has been producing, gradually but convincingly, more stability and peace perspective to our region.

I wish to thank the distinguished ambassador of Serbia for bringing to our attention the tragic events of Mitrovica 5 years ago, which were immediately condemned by all, Kosovar authorities of that time included. Yet, they happened 5 years ago, and the whole unrest was triggered by a fatal incident in which three Albanian kids lost their lives; but the current situation is far from such events. Today's multiethnic independent Kosova, through its Constitution, law enforcement institutions, as well as the international assistance guarantees equal opportunities to all its citizens, be them Albanian or non-Albanian. This is the signal that Kosova Government has released from the very first day of the independent Kosova, and we would welcome similar signals from Belgrade, too, so that the people of Kosova, regardless of their nationality, be freed from the horrors of the past and work together for their European future.

Madam Chair,

Albania will spare no efforts, as it has constantly and patiently been doing until now, to cementing peace and stability in our region. It is Albania's strong conviction and belief that closer cooperation and reconciliation of the countries and peoples of our region will bring us all closer with each-other and will inevitably speed up the processes of Euro-Atlantic integration. We belong to this region and we have to work together for the region. We remain very optimistic that Serbs and Albanians in Kosova have all the possibilities and capabilities, maybe more than ever, to live in harmony and prosperity, respecting the common democratic values as well as respecting each-other's colourful cultural heritage. Albania fully supports the work done by the EULEX Mission and considers it as an instrumental development for implementing up-to-date standards of rule of law.

While reconfirming its strongest support for the official authorities of Kosovo and their readiness to cooperate with EULEX in full compliance with its constitution and Ahtisaari Plan, which remain crucial for the success of EU mission, Albanian side believes that Kosovo has the required capacities to face successfully the new responsibilities it has to undertake aftermath the conclusion of UN Mission.

Albanian side hailed the determination of EU Mission and that of other international factors for the maintenance of territory integrity of Kosovo, the well functioning of its legitimate institutions throughout Kosovo including the north of Mitrovica.

Albania welcomes the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on February 5 for Kosovo, which clearly defines Kosova's European perspective and urges Belgrade to stop supporting parallel structures in Kosova, so that it can play a constructive role for the full integration of Serbian community into the social and political life in Kosova, because this is the only way to guarantee the establishment of democracy and peace in Kosovo as a fundamental condition for long term stability.

Democracy is the remedy for today and tomorrow, and we should honor Democracy.

Thank you Madam Chair!