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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 September 2008

**On the statement by Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia**

Mr. Chairman,

We warmly welcome Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, to today's special meeting of the Permanent Council.

We agree with the assessments of the current situation in Kosovo contained in the distinguished Foreign Minister's statement. We see today how estrangement is being artificially inflamed between the Kosovo Albanians and Serbs, the latter of whom categorically refuse to accept forcible integration into this self-proclaimed State. As a result, the establishment of trust between both sides is becoming ever more difficult.

Like the Serbian side, we are concerned at the attempts to dismantle the existing formats for an international presence in Kosovo on the alleged grounds that these formats are not in keeping with present-day realities. Behind these attempts, we see a desire to legalize a structure that would turn its attention to the implementation of the so-called "Ahtisaari plan".

We are firmly convinced that the United Nations must retain its leading role in the settlement of the Kosovo problem with the continuation of the fully fledged operations of the United Nations mission in the territory on the basis of Security Council resolution 1244. Any change in the format of the international civilian presence in the territory must be approved in advance by the United Nations Security Council, in a way that observes the fundamental provisions set out in its resolution 1244.

We entirely understand the desire of the European Union to play a more substantial and responsible role in the affairs of Kosovo. However, this desire should not be realized through unilateral steps, as is currently happening, but on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, respecting the statutory prerogatives of that body.

We are convinced that a long-term solution to the Kosovo problem can be found only on the basis of agreement between the parties themselves. In this context, we continue to favour the resumption of a direct negotiating process between Belgrade and Pristina.

We wholeheartedly support the intention voiced by the Serbian Government to request of the General Assembly of the United Nations that the International Court of the United Nations deliver a consultative opinion regarding the present events in Kosovo. It is the inalienable right of every State to seek and obtain an opinion from the highest international judicial institution. Any attempts to thwart this will merely confirm that those engaged in so doing are resorting to improper methods. For our part, we intend to rigorously insist on the rule of law in international affairs.

Our interest lies in continuing the closest possible co-operation with our Serbian partners as we seek to strengthen European security and to further stabilize the situation in the Western Balkan region.

Mr. Chairman,

At the last meeting of the Permanent Council we already stated our position on the need to reach an agreement with the authorities of the host country on the list of candidates to head OSCE field missions. In that context, we support the proposal, emphasized in the statement by the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs, to open a new competition for the position of Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. We take the view that this is the only reasonable way out of the current situation, and we request that this be taken into account.

Thank you for your attention.