



**STATEMENT BY MS. MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
AMBASSADOR OF SERBIA,
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS OF
THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
H.E. MS CONDOLEEZZA RICE,
AT THE 669th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

31 May 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Serbia to join others in very warmly welcoming the Secretary of State of the United States of America, H.E. Dr. Condoleezza Rice, to this Special Meeting of the Permanent Council. Allow me also to express our appreciation for the fact that, by visiting and addressing the OSCE today, Secretary Rice underlines and enhances the significance of the organization.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me, first of all, assure Secretary Rice that Serbia attaches highest importance to having and further developing friendly and comprehensive bilateral relations with the United States on all levels (including, of course, the U.S. delegation to the OSCE). This, in fact, is one of the cornerstones and priorities of Serbia's foreign policy, and we are confident that the democratic Serbia of today is and will continue to be regarded as a reliable partner by the United States, as it was proved, among other things, during the recent, very successful visit of the head of the Serbian army general staff to Washington.

Mr. Chairman,

Serbia is strongly committed not only to bringing forward the reform process in the country speedily, but also to significantly contributing to the stability and security in the region. In both regards the OSCE is a valuable and important partner by providing assistance and expertise to our authorities and by enhancing regional cooperation. Allow me to stress that in this respect Serbia is particularly interested in the full implementation of the Sarajevo Process with the assistance of the OSCE field missions in the respective countries.

One of the major concerns shared today both by Serbia and the United States, as well as by the OSCE, is the issue of the Kosovo status. So far, the positions of Serbia and the United States on how to solve that issue differ, as do the positions of Belgrade and Prishtina, but, let me assure you, that in a democratic solution-finding process

differences are there to be overcome – step by step, by dialogue, agreements and compromises. To claim, as the United Nations Special Envoy Mr. Ahtisaari implies, that the gap is insurmountable, amounts to a surrender of the whole set of values that rule the democratic world today.

Mr. Chairman,

Fully committed to finding a peaceful, lasting and comprehensive solution to the future status of Kosovo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Vuk Jeremić submitted, on behalf of the Republic of Serbia, on the 25th of May to the Secretary General of the United Nations an initiative for launching a new stage of negotiations on the Kosovo status. The objective is to find, with the help of international mediation, a solution rooted in the fundamental principles and norms of international law, which would guarantee a long-term stability of the region as well as fulfil the conditions for its unimpeded economic and social development. In order for this goal to be achieved, it is necessary to establish a good negotiating environment, propose the appropriate procedure, and allow for an appropriate time frame.

In proposing this initiative, the Republic of Serbia, aware of the historic importance of a just settlement of the issue, stands ready to fully accept its share of responsibility for the successful conduct and conclusion of the negotiations. As we have already brought forward on different occasions, Mr. Chairman, this is a unique opportunity for a historic reconciliation between Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians, a reconciliation based on democratic principles and values, on the rule of law and the respect of human rights. We would like to encourage the international community to do, what it has so far neglected to do – to support this process by a broad range of confidence-building measures between Belgrade and Prishtina, between Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians.

Mr. Chairman,

We are confident that the international community, that particularly the United States can and will significantly contribute to that process of finding a peaceful, lasting and comprehensive solution.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, allow me to wish Secretary Rice, her country and her people sincerely all the best.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman