



Address to  
the Fifteenth Ministerial Council Meeting of  
the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

by H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia

Madrid, 29 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and privilege to join you this afternoon in Madrid, the splendid capital of a country that is one of Europe's greatest democratic success stories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate our host and my dear friend, Foreign Minister Moratinos, for the dynamic leadership of the Kingdom of Spain's chairmanship-in-office. I would further like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for the success with which you and your team have implemented your country's chairmanship priorities during this crucial time for the OSCE. I very much appreciate your efforts, and your generous hospitality.

I also wish to acknowledge the work of Mr. Knut Vollebaek, the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities. We are to confirm his appointment during the course of this Ministerial Council. I would like to express my belief that his continued constructive engagement will lead to a decrease in ethnic tensions that threaten to infringe upon peace, stability and security in the OSCE area.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE is a unique, multi-dimensional forum for dialogue and cooperation in Europe. Its fundamental merit has been the establishment of principles and values expressed in political commitments that continue to serve as a security framework for relations amongst its participating states.

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. These are: 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, stability and security in Europe. We all share these interwoven democratic values, values that Serbia proudly and consistently promotes in the conduct of its foreign and domestic policies.

That is why I would like to express my conviction that the package of ministerial decisions that we find before us will be adopted during this meeting of the Council, so that the OSCE can continue to play an important role in safeguarding security, stability and cooperation throughout the OSCE area. Adopting these ministerial decisions at this time would, moreover, reaffirm the unity of this organization—a unity expressed in the manner in which decisions are made, namely through the fundamental respect of the principle of consensus-making, as well as in the contents of the decisions themselves.

Because time is short, I will comment on only a few of the elements of the package.

First, the Republic of Serbia pays particular attention to the OSCE's activities in the domain of strengthening tolerance. Saluting the Organization's important work in this field, I highlight the recent Chairmanship Conference held in Cordoba on the advancement of dialogue between Islam and the West, during which I had occasion to address the vital importance of engaging the question of Islam in Europe.

Second, my country places great significance on issues related to climate change and environmental protection. The Republic of Serbia fully supports the implementation of the Belgrade Declaration adopted at the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment for Europe held in my country in October of this year. And we support the OSCE's contribution to the implementation of this crucial agenda for the future.

Third, 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 Mission in Belgrade.

Fourth, the strong commitment on the part of the Republic of Serbia to rapidly accede to the European Union is well known. And I believe that all other countries in the region are truly eager to consolidate the European idea of democracy, the values that are its foundation, the institutions that flow from it, the reconciliation they require, and the cooperation they entail. 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.

Fifth, and relatedly, I wish to highlight that since the OSCE is a regional security organization as defined by Chapter 8 of the UN Charter, it can play a unique role in helping to resolve regional conflicts, manage crises, and rebuild societies. This brings me to Serbia's position on the future of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia's southern province under UN administration since June 1999.

Mr. Chairman,

Through the eight year history of OMIK, the OSCE participating states have invested great efforts and resources to instill peace, stability and security into the fabric of Kosovo's fractured society. Unfortunately, the work of this largest OSCE field mission leaves much to be desired.

I believe that we all share a firm commitment to create a sustainable environment of peace, stability and security for *all* the province's residents. And yet, even a cursory examination of the Mission's insufficient engagement in assisting the vital process of returning a large number of IDPs, advancing reconciliation efforts, and coordinating its activities with the OSCE's Belgrade Mission as well as with the Government of the Republic of Serbia—to mention just a few—leads us to demand that OMIK fundamentally reassess its methods and its tactics.

We are all aware of the fact that this Mission's future engagement represents one of the greatest challenges for the OSCE and its participating states. Greater emphasis must be placed on fully conforming to the requirements of international law and its basic documents such as the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. The continuing failure of OMIK to implement its mandate is not an option. Greater adherence to the letter of UN Security Council Resolution 1244—which calls for the active involvement of the international community, including the OSCE—is absolutely necessary. And, I must add, the OSCE's future presence in Kosovo cannot be considered in isolation to all our efforts designed to implement the provisions of 1244, or any future Security Council Resolution.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to repeat my country's firm dedication to continue to constructively engage in the process of finding a mutually-acceptable, negotiated solution to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija by fostering values such as patience, dialogue, cooperation, consensus-building, and compromise. My country is emboldened by a passage from the document in which the Kingdom of Spain outlined its Chairmanship priorities, a passage that perfectly illustrates the spirit in which all OSCE participating countries must continue to operate: "Dialogue is not an end in itself: it is the most civilized instrument to resolve or overcome differences."

Regrettably, the Troika-led process of talks on the future status of Kosovo has of late turned into a dialogue that has reinforced differences between Belgrade and Pristina instead of serving as a forum for overcoming them. As a result, an impasse has been created, one that threatens the democratic gains made in the region since the passing away of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, as well as one that fundamentally undermines the legitimacy of not only this Organization, but the international system as a whole.

Mr. Chairman,

The reason is elementary. As you know, December 10<sup>th</sup> has been set as a deadline. And some key participants in the process are telling Belgrade and Pristina that Kosovo's independence will be imposed if no agreement is reached by then. But this has only exacerbated the situation, for it promotes the interests of only one side: the Kosovo Albanians.

As a result, the secessionist Kosovo Albanians have little incentive to negotiate with us in good faith. They have calculated that all they have to do is sit back, appear engaged, wait out the clock, and count the days to the imposition of independence.

There are attempts to enable the establishment of a precedent in the OSCE area that unambiguously violates the values and language of the Helsinki Final Act by forcibly partitioning Serbia—which is what the imposition of independence amount to.

Preventing the slide to irrelevance of the founding document of the OSCE should be our number one priority, especially since doing so would fundamentally strengthen Serbia's democratic capacity to sustain the process of reform, consolidate the region's democracies and contribute to their economic transformation, as well as enhance the European Union membership perspective of the Western Balkans as a whole, and therefore secure peace, stability, security and cooperation in our corner of Europe.

How to proceed? We agree to re-define the significance of December 10<sup>th</sup>—to view it as little more than a marker for assessing progress—by affirming that there is nothing more important than reaching an agreement acceptable to all. As a result, an environment would be created—for the first time since the future status process began—in which an historical settlement can be crafted.

Why is that? Because for the first time, a symmetrical set of incentives to reach a compromise, mutually-acceptable agreement, would be on offer to both sides: one that says, in the spirit of the OSCE: “keep at it until you concur”—and one that respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia while enabling the Kosovo Albanians to satisfy their legitimate demand of substantial self-governance. And so open the way for Serbs and Albanians to march together to the beckoning doors of the European Union. For if the spirit that was born in Helsinki in 1975 teaches us anything about security and cooperation in Europe, it is that geo-political priorities mustn't be sacrificed on the altar of communal aspirations.

---

In the end, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is salutary to remind ourselves that we are the privileged inheritors of the prudent vision of those who chose to forswear war as a means of solving problems and conflicts in Europe. As a result of what was forged in Helsinki in 1975, unimaginable prosperity shapes the lives of hundreds of millions of Europeans living in peace, security, and cooperation. 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 area. In short, the promise of Europe is coming to pass. Let us continue to build on this great achievement of peace, security and cooperation in the time to come.

I thank you for your attention.