



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MIROSLAVA BEHAM,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SERBIA,  
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS OF  
AMBASSADOR WERNER ALMHOFER,  
HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN KOSOVO/ SERBIA,  
AT THE 773<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 September 2009

Madame Chair,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Serbia, I would like to warmly welcome Ambassador Werner Almhofer, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo/ Serbia, to the Permanent Council and thank him for his reports, both written and oral.

Madame Chair,

Two days ago we witnessed the initiation of a dialogue of the 56 OSCE participating States which we all hope will help us to overcome existing disagreements, strengthen the organization and boost security in the OSCE region. As you rightly stated, Madame Chair, in your concluding remarks to this first round of consultations in the framework of the Corfu Process, there were some common denominators that marked the discussion, such as the strong wish and will to restore confidence and to conduct a dialogue in a constructive spirit, with mutual respect and in good faith. A keyword in the discussion was also the term “common”, which, as you underlined, should be predominant in our approach to tackle all open issues and challenges we are facing.

In fact, I believe that our daily work and regular activities give us ample opportunity to make a start and to prove that we are really united by common interests and objectives – which are: to provide for the welfare and security of all people living in the OSCE region – and that we can achieve them commonly.

I believe, Madame Chair, that the OSCE presence in Kosovo is a kind of touch-stone for the seriousness of our expressed will to act commonly, on common foundations and for a common purpose. And I think that under the given, very complex political circumstances we can already speak of a common success when it comes to the continuity of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and its status neutrality under resolution 1244 and the Mission’s mandate. We were able to find a common ground for continuing activities that would contribute to the development of a peaceful, secure, democratic and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, were all communities feel free, safe and at home. - This consensus is a common success we all can be proud of.

Based on this accord we can proceed together in identifying the shortcomings that have to be remedied. For example, no one in this hall would deny that Kosovo is still a deeply divided society, divided along ethnic lines, a division which is obvious in all spheres of life and which clearly was deepened by the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. I believe that we can agree also that Kosovo is an undeveloped society, with weak institutions, the Judiciary and the Rule of Law being presumably the weakest segment. I believe that we can agree, as well, that, for example, the media show financial and editorial weaknesses and are susceptible to political influences, or that the access to education for all must be improved, that crime and corruption are widespread and that safety is not safeguarded for all. Furthermore, no one would deny that there is virtually no progress concerning the return of IDPs and refugees and that one reason for this can be found in the fact that the process of property restitution is paralyzed.

Madame Chair, I don't think that anybody disagrees when I say that the OSCE Mission in Kosovo can, in the framework of its mandate and in coordination with UNMIK, EULEX and the OSCE participating States, contribute essentially to improve the mentioned deficiencies.

On our part, we would like to call on the Mission to even increase its efforts in the implementation of its mandate and to act more resolutely, in particular when it comes to the violation of human rights of the most vulnerable parts of the population - the non-Albanian communities.

We call on the Mission, as well, to inform objectively about the situation in Kosovo and encourage it to publish more thematic reports like the one released in August on the "Fraudulent Property Transactions in the Peć Region", which states, among other things, that „the OSCE has identified a significant number of sales of property belonging to Kosovo Serb displaced persons that have been sold without their knowledge“ and that „transactions have been conducted on the basis of forged documents that results in serious human rights violations constituting an impediment to return and property restitution for displaced persons“.

We believe that the findings of this report are just the tip of the iceberg, but they are unquestionably very valuable starting-points for all stakeholders involved in the property restitution process – from the displaced persons to the Kosovo courts and the international presences in Kosovo. It would be to our common advantage, if the OSCE Mission in Kosovo would provide us with more information of this kind so that we can commonly tackle the problems in Kosovo in a more substantial way.

Madame Chair,

I believe that no one in this hall will disagree when I say that Serbia was and is, under the given, very complex political situation, most cooperative and constructive when it comes to the OSCE activities in Kosovo. And Serbia will remain so – for the benefit of all people living in Kosovo. We are confident that, if we all show the necessary

flexibility and understanding, we will be able to commonly increase our efforts in developing Kosovo into a truly peaceful, safe, democratic and multi-ethnic society.

On this note I would like to wish Ambassador Almhofer and his team all the best for their endeavors.

Thank you, Madame Chair.