



Address to
the Permanent Council of
the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

by H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić
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Vienna, 19 February 2008

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Members of the Permanent Council,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for having convened this emergency session of the Permanent Council.

What has been dreaded has come to pass: the unilateral and illegal declaration of independence of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of our southern province of Kosovo and Metohija from the Republic of Serbia.

This grave threat to the security of Europe must be addressed, for the principles of the OSCE have been shaken to their very foundation. But there is still time to prevent the situation from spiraling needlessly out of control.

We call on this body to condemn the unilateral and illegal declaration of independence by the authorities in Pristina from the Republic of Serbia, by reaffirming the OSCE's basic principles and values, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, and the Charter for European Security.

The participating States must do their duty. We must remain steadfast in upholding the very principles that have brought unimaginable prosperity to the lives of hundreds of millions of Europeans living in an unprecedented era of peace and security. How we react to this flagrant violation of the core norms of international conduct will determine the future course not only of this organization, but also for the enduring strength of the values we have pledged to uphold and defend—universal values that were first enshrined into law by the United Nations Charter, before being enriched by the Helsinki Final Act and the other core documents of our Organization.

Permit me therefore, Mr. Chairman, to begin with a summary of the points the Republic of Serbia made to the Security Council of the United Nations, the body charged with the primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

One: Security Council Resolution 1244—as well as our Constitution—unambiguously reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia, including our southern province of Kosovo. Its language explicitly places a Chapter VII obligation—a binding obligation—on all member-states to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia, consistent with the first principle of the United Nations Charter: the sovereign equality of states.

Two: We have called on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to instruct his Special Representative to our southern province to make swift and full use of his reserved powers, as enumerated in the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo, by proclaiming this illegitimate declaration of independence null and void. He must also be instructed to dissolve the Kosovo Assembly on the grounds that declaring independence is not in conformity with Resolution 1244.

Three: The Republic of Serbia has called on KFOR to remain status-neutral. Only by continuing to abide by the legal framework of its operation, namely paragraph 9 of Resolution 1244, can KFOR retain its capacity to prevent a repeat of the ethnic cleansing against the Serbian population, and the cultural cleansing against our nation's holy sites, that took place in the latter half of 1999 and during the carefully orchestrated pogrom of March 2004.

And four, Mr. Chairman, we have welcomed, as a matter of principle, any demonstration of the European Union's deepening commitment to the Western Balkans. And for that reason, we welcome the EU's desire to increase its presence in our southern province. But it is the position of the Republic of Serbia that such a mission must seek a mandate from the Security Council, as a plain reading of paragraphs 5 and 19 of Resolution 1244 makes clear. Only such a mandate can bestow an EU mission with the international legitimacy so crucial to the fulfillment of its tasks—one of which is, ironically, the establishment of the rule of law.

The tasks of that mission, Mr. Chairman, will indeed be many. Kosovo today is the most dysfunctional entity in the OSCE space. Little tangible progress has been achieved, despite the billions of euros that have been invested in its development.

In other words, Kosovo has not come close to achieving the standards of good-governance that ought to have remained a pre-qualification for the commencement of the process to determine future status. For rather than focusing on the very hard work of improving the lives of all its residents, the authorities in Pristina have chosen instead to destabilize the region. Instead of building bridges, they have opted to widen and deepen the chasm. The authorities in Pristina have, in short, made an irresponsible decision to pursue the nihilistic politics of alienation, instead of a progressive politics of concord.

Mr. Chairman,

The abject failure of the Kosovo Albanians to embrace the 21st-century principles of Europe—such as compromise, concession, and consensus-building—have produced a

precedent that will create very troubling consequences to the stability of the international system and the community of democracies that is the OSCE.

The precedent to which I refer is five-fold. First, it legitimizes the doctrine of imposing solutions to ethnic conflicts. Second, it legitimizes the act of unilateral secession by a provincial or local entity. Third, it transforms the right to self-determination into a right to independence. Fourth, it legitimizes the forced partition of internationally-recognized, sovereign states. And fifth, it violates the commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes in Europe.

All told, the declaration of independence by the Kosovo Albanians from the Republic of Serbia, if left unchecked, would constitute a fundamental attack on the sovereign equality of states, and it would resurrect the discredited Cold War doctrine of limited sovereignty. It would restore the dangerous view that the willful exercise of might triumphs over the steady application of the law by all.

There would be no room for justice in such a worldview. And there would be no room left for any other clause of the Helsinki Final Act to have standing, were we to draw an equivalence between the right of self-determination and the right to secession. For we, the participating States, would be saying, in effect, the first principle of the OSCE would in fact be the right to secession. Everything else—all the other clauses, all of Helsinki's enumerated rights, are secondary.

Let me be clear, Mr. Chairman. The Republic of Serbia holds that the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, and the Charter for European Security constitute a binding code of conduct on the participating States and their governments. Our adherence to the principles enumerated therein forms the basis of security and cooperation in Europe.

As such, we must act on the courage of our convictions, condemn the unilateral declaration of independence by the Kosovo Albanians, and make sure that Kosovo is not granted a seat at the OSCE table. Anything less would roll the dice on the continuing relevance of this Organization.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Serbia believes in the principles of this Organization and those of the United Nations. We believe in them because we believe in the cohesive strength of the international community, because we believe that the ultimate legitimacy of outcomes can be conferred only through the United Nations, and because we believe in the legitimacy of the OSCE process for solving disputes peacefully, in agreement with one another.

And that is why the Republic of Serbia sees, in the far horizon, a flickering beacon of hope that signifies "justice can still prevail."

Born of the determination that we are in the right—and armed with the fortitude of a unified nation—a commitment to justice compels us to hope—but equally to demand—that a negotiated solution be found. That a way to address the legitimate cause of distress of the

Kosovo Albanians can be put alongside the preservation of a Serbia whole and free, fully integrated into Europe, and actively engaged with the world.

This is the basic tenet of our national interest. It will not change. And we will pursue it for as long as Serbia itself remains.

We will pursue it by seeking to negotiate with the Kosovo Albanians. We are ready, at any time, in any place, in any manner, to engage in talks with the authorities in Pristina and agree on a mutually-acceptable solution to the future status of our southern province. And we are ready to do so without pre-condition, save one—the same one each and every participating state in the OSCE would attach to talks with a secessionist entity. That condition is sovereignty.

We can give them substantial self-government—the broadest possible autonomy one can imagine. We can guarantee that we will not tax them and that we will not police them. Their judicial and educational systems do not have to be re-integrated into ours. Our currency does not have to have a presence in Kosovo. Our military would not have to be there, either. And we would not interfere with their relationship with the World Bank; with them having separate membership in international sporting federations; or with them having some sort of representation abroad.

But we cannot give them sovereignty. No country can relinquish the ultimate basis of its legitimacy. For us, Kosovo stands at the crucible of our identity; it is the essential link between our past and our future; it is what ties the living tradition of Serbia to itself today. And when the past is asked to no longer illuminate the future, the nation is in effect being asked to walk into the darkness of humanity.

I appeal to all the countries here present, and to the authorities in Pristina, to understand the spirit in which I make these remarks. We cannot afford any more missed opportunities to build trust, to seek agreement, to consolidate values, and to arrive at a solution that benefits us all.

We are ready to do our part—to channel the hope, to remove the fear, and to instill the confidence in ourselves necessary to succeed in the noble project to secure the future against those who challenge its very foundation.

Mr. Chairman,

Kosovo has unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia, in contravention of the United Nations Charter, Security Council Resolution 1244, and the Helsinki Final Act.

If this violation of the very nature of the international system is not wrong, then nothing is wrong.

We all know this in our hearts.

And knowing this fact—this universal truth—some have chosen to ignore it. Some will embrace the failure of reason and reject the binding commitment to seek the peaceful resolution of disputes with the agreement of all its stakeholders. Some will seek to impose an

outcome that flies in the face of the values that bring us together in this chamber, that calls into question the very legitimacy of the work we do here.

The Republic of Serbia will not accept responsibility for this shameful failure. History will judge those who have chosen to trample on the bedrock of the international system, and on the principles upon which security and cooperation in Europe have been established. It is *they* who will have to give an account as to why the construction of the future will be attempted on a foundation of sand and rubble.

The Republic of Serbia did not consent, has not consented, will not consent. For Kosovo and Metohija shall remain a part of Serbia forever.

Mr. Chairman,

In the Book of Proverbs, we see written: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a picture of silver.”

For the Republic of Serbia, the first principles of the international community enumerated in the United Nations Charter have proven to be an apple of gold to the world. And, for Europe, the Helsinki Final Act is the picture of silver, subsequently framed around it.

Membership in these two organizations are the ultimate tests of sovereignty. Membership in these two standard-bearers—these two great pillars—of the international system, signifies belonging to the world community of sovereign nations. The Republic of Serbia is one such nation. And Kosovo will never be. It will never acquire this ultimate status of legitimacy. Membership will always elude it. Consent will never be given. Kosovo shall remain a part of Serbia forever.

Thank you for your attention.