



**STATEMENT BY MS. MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
AMBASSADOR OF SERBIA,
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF SLOVENIA,
H.E. DR. DIMITRIJ RUPEL,
AT THE 697th MEETING OF
THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

24 January 2008

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Serbia, I take great pleasure in warmly welcoming to the Permanent Council H.E. Dr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, on the occasion of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). We would also like to thank him for his comprehensive, clear and open address.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Serbia finds itself between two rounds of Presidential Elections. With regard to the first round, the OSCE observer mission assessed that – I quote – “Serbia has shown once again that it can hold democratic elections” – end of quote. We believe that assessments of the second round will not differ much from this one. The unexpectedly high voter turn-out in these elections showed that the population in Serbia, in this moment, is eager to participate in the democratic process shaping the future of the country. What this future will look like, however, does not only depend on the political, social and economic programs the two remaining presidential candidates have to offer.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to stress, that the future of Serbia also lies, to a great extent, in the hands of the international community.

The future of Serbia will largely depend on how much the international community is willing to sincerely take into account and take seriously the justified interests of Serbia, or not. It will depend on how much the international community will be fair, unbiased, even-handed and just towards Serbia, or not. It will depend on how much the international community will comply with its own principles and values and with international law, which is the foundation of our international system and the groundwork upon which, among others, the European

Union is built. The European Union would have never evolved into the most successful peace-project in history, had it not been created in a process and spirit of peaceful dialogue, mutual understanding, confidence-building, compromise and the respect of and adherence to international law.

Mr. Chairman,

The vast majority of the Serbian citizens – and politicians – deeply believes that Serbia's future lies in the European Union – in an European Union that is friendly towards Serbia in every respect. The signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement as soon as possible – as you said, Mr. Minister, in the coming days – would unquestionably strengthen this belief.

Serbian citizens would have even more confidence in the European Union and the democratic processes, that are the foundations of this peace-project, were it not for the messages contradictory to democratic principles coming from Brussels and EU member states. Let us take, for example, the announced EU Mission to the South Serbian province of Kosovo.

In Serbia there are no voices against an EU Mission in Kosovo *in principle*. However, the way the mission is intended to be established and sent to Kosovo represents a very obvious attempt to implement the Ahtisaari Plan, which was rejected by the Republic of Serbia as unacceptable and was never adopted by the United Nations Security Council. The Mission of the European Union would, therefore, illegally enforce the Ahtisaari Plan, which is something which many people in Serbia undoubtedly perceive as an unfriendly act towards the country.

In addition, and equally important - there is no legal basis for the establishment of an EU mission. The only valid legal basis would be a new resolution of the Security Council or an amendment of resolution 1244 in the part concerning the civilian presence in Kosovo, reaffirming the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Chairman,

We call on the European Union to profoundly consider every step it takes with regard to Serbia as a potential future member state. As we said – it is the international community that has a large share in deciding the future of our country. In this sense we look forward to fruitfully and constructively cooperate with Slovenia, our partner and close neighbor, and with our friends from the Slovenian delegation to the OSCE.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman