



Opening Address

**of Dr Dimitrij Rupel, Chairman-in-Office of the OCSE
at the United States Institute of Peace
Washington, 7. March 2005**

Dear Dan, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

- It is an honor to be here today, to address the Balkan problem with an institution as distinguished and engaged in the region as USIP, and to have Dan who has invested so much of his time into making the Balkans work engaged in the problem.
- Though much debated just a year ago, it seems now clear that “standards before status” is no longer a sufficient approach and that we do need an additional option. There is a permanent reform paralysis in the region which, I think, is tied directly to the status question. In order to move forward and complete the process of Balkan stabilization, Kosovo final status will have to be discussed in parallel as we review the standards.
- The so called Standards Review is scheduled for sometime this July. It is important that the authorities in Pristina take this review seriously. For this reason, I’m in favor on insisting on standards. But to continue being credible on the ground we also need to put into place a process for final status negotiations.
- There are a few reasons for urgency, and the upcoming review process is only one of them. The other potential variable of instability is the ICTY indictment of the current Kosovo Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj. While I don’t think that the Albanians will opt for the street, violence may nonetheless be sparked by those who may wish for the status quo ante – i.e. by radicals from Belgrade, and organized criminal elements in Kosovo, or those associated with them.

- We should also not forget that there is a worrying probability that a highly disenfranchised local population will begin venting their frustrations on the international troops and personnel in Kosovo.
- To reiterate, time is running out and we need a highly pragmatic, and a multifaceted solution to the Kosovo question. What we (namely within the EU and with the trans-Atlantic partnership) should agree on as soon as possible are:
 - What kind of an end-result we do not want from final status negotiations
 - What kind of a framework and timeline is necessary to negotiate a final status.
- Having said this, let me also caution that the fear of Kosovo becoming a failed state is legitimate and we should certainly accurately assess Kosovo's institutional capacity, but I would urge against this being the main premise upon which we make our decision on whether Kosovo can become an independent state. There are other legal arguments – like the right to external self determination born through denial of internal protection of minority rights – that of comparative value and cannot be dismissed; particularly not give the background of the NATO intervention (which was in many respects humanitarian).
- The relevant question then, I think, is what should not be on the negotiations table when we discuss status:
 - No return of Kosovo to pre-1999 status.
 - No unification of Kosovo with any Albanian populated country or region.
 - No partition of Kosovo.
 - No redrawing of borders.
 - Agreement between Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia on protection of minorities.
 - Multilateral agreement regulating the demilitarization of the region (particularly border segment).
 - The security for the national, religious and cultural identity of Serbs in Kosovo must be guaranteed.

- No indefinite international presence.
 - No immediate pull-out of the international forces and administrative authorities.
- As for the process, I would think that the UN (with the help of the EU, the US and RF) should appoint a Special Envoy who will work to bridge the gap between Belgrade and Pristina. Final agreement on Kosovo should be sanctioned by the Contact Group, and done under the auspices of the UN – through a new UN Resolution. At the end, I should stress that any final agreement on Kosovo should include both Belgrade and Pristina.