



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SERBIA TO THE OSCE,
IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE HEAD OF THE
OSCE MISSION TO SERBIA,
AMBASSADOR DIMITRIOS KIPREOS,
AT THE 796th MEETING OF
THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 March 2010

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the delegation of Serbia I am pleased to very warmly welcome Ambassador Dimitrios Kypreos, Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, to his first appearance before the Permanent Council. Let me also thank you, Ambassador Kypreos, for your comprehensive, clear and eloquent written and oral reports that are evidence of your personal commitment to the success both of the OSCE Mission *and* Serbia. Allow me also in this regard to express to you, Ambassador, our appreciation for defining our relations as a *partnership*, which we believe they truly are and will stay in the future. It is such kind of partnership, based on mutual respect and on the common interest to efficiently advance the reform process in our country, that will bring about real progress and success.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me now to note that we share the optimism – expressed not only by the OSCE Mission’s report – that Serbia today is a politically stable, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional European democracy on its way to full EU membership, which remains our most important strategic foreign policy objective. The abolition of the visa regime with the EU, the entry into force of the Interim Trade Agreement and Serbia’s formal application for EU membership gave a decisive boost to Serbia’s EU aspirations and the people’s mood towards EU integration processes. I may argue that this is the outcome of a constructive partnership between Serbia and the European Union, as well.

In this spirit, Serbia will continue to put all her efforts, among others, into strengthening the credibility and efficiency of our institutions, fighting corruption and organized crime, completing the harmonization of our legislation with the most developed democracies and enhancing cooperation with the countries of our region.

By saying this, Mr. Chairman, I would like to emphasize that another foreign policy priority of Serbia is to decisively advance regional peace, stability and prosperity

through, again, a true partnership with our neighbors. Ample evidence of Serbia's firm commitment to peacefully resolve even the most sensitive and complex issues is our approach to the Kosovo UDI. Our position is based on the respect for international law and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all United Nations member states. Since it is addressed in the Mission's report, allow me in this context to state clearly that Serbia, as one of the signatories and guarantors of the Dayton Peace Accords, is fully committed to the preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina and emphatically supports every progress of the country as well as all reforms and decisions to which the three constituent peoples agree in a democratic dialogue.

Mr. Chairman,

It is with the objective of enhancing regional stability that Serbia gave a new impetus to the resolution of refugee problems in the region by initiating the organization of a conference which is planned to take place later this month and which should bring us a crucial step forward in settling all open refugee issues, including statistics, and finally closing this sad chapter. We highly appreciate the Mission's support for our resolve to pursue this matter constructively, in close cooperation with our neighbors, and underline what is stated in the Mission's report, namely that the international community's involvement in this matter "is crucial to ensure continuity of the process and to safeguard the international standards related to the protection of IDPs and refugees".

While we are facing the challenges of the refugee issues pro-actively, we are trying hard to find solutions to the plight of about 200,000 IDPs from Kosovo, as well. We believe that this is one of the areas where a closer cooperation between the missions in Belgrade and Pristina is not only desirable, but can be pivotal.

Mr. Chairman,

The cooperation between the OSCE Mission and the Serbian authorities is manifold and dynamic. In view of our limited time for discussions, however, let me single out shortly only two more areas to which we attach particular importance. One is the cooperation with the ICTY. The Republic of Serbia is fully committed to successfully finalize this cooperation, being well aware of the fact that this is also a prerequisite for a change of values in the Serbian society as a whole. In this respect we particularly welcome the Mission's assistance to the War Crimes Prosecutors's Office.

The other issue I would like to emphasize is related to the area of responsibility of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, an area that is close to our heart, which is why we have, as Minister Jeremić stated two days ago before the UN Human Rights Council, nearly accomplished our goal of total compliance with all relevant human rights standards. And this is why we very much value the Mission's constructive contribution to the implementation of the National Strategy for Advancing the Position of Roma and highly appreciate the Mission's active involvement in the implementation of the Law on the Elections and Competencies of the National Minority Councils, in particular by mobilizing ethnic minorities to register and vote in the forthcoming National Minority

Council elections, in a calm and constructive atmosphere. We believe that active minority participation is indispensable, as minority integration is not a one-way street.

All in all, Mr. Chairman, let me underline our firm belief that by closely coordinating Serbia's need for assistance and the Mission's activities, we will best put into effect our common objectives – be it in the above mentioned areas or in those related to others as are the situation in the South of Serbia or in the Raška region, the media sector or the reform of the judiciary.

On this note let me thank once again Ambassador Kypreos and wish him and his able team the best of successes in their endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman