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STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY
GENERAL OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE,
MR. WALTER SCHWIMMER,
delivered by Vesko GARČEVIĆ, Ambassador of Serbia and Montenegro, at
518th Meeting of the Permanent Council, 22 July 2004

Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to warmly welcome our distinguished guest, Secretary General of the Council of Europe H. E. Walter Schwimmer at today's Permanent Council meeting. As always his address was comprehensive, encompassing all scope of the CoE activities and at the same time inspiring by its openness that is a guarantee for the conducive debate.

Once again, we would like to express our appreciation for Mr. Schwimmer's personal efforts in facilitating the process of accession of Serbia and Montenegro to the membership of the oldest European organization. The fact that all the countries from the SEE are the members of the CoE highlights the indispensable role that the CoE has recently played in our Region, especially when it comes to the issues of protection of human rights, democratization and the rule of law. By doing so, the CoE has facilitated the overall efforts of the Governments of the countries in the SEE to accomplish the process of democratic and structural reforms that will inevitably bring to a predictable final stage when these countries become the full fledged members of a wider European structure.

The fact that the CoE and the OSCE share the same values and standards, embrace the same geographic areas and have many thematic and conceptual similarities, serves as a common ground for the close inter-organization cooperation not only in the concrete activities but also in conjunction with the strategic goals set up as a very essence of these two organizations. Among others, this cooperation is also symbolized by the CoE Secretary General regular visits to the PC and regular "three+three" meetings.

I would like to mention just one important example where our two Organizations could show complementariness of our respective action: We understand that the CoE aims at drawing up a European convention against trafficking in human beings, which would provide the legal framework for

combating this evil with specific approach for victims of trafficking. At the same time a common legal framework would facilitate the implementation of the OSCE Action plan to combat trafficking in human beings, which is an important and challenging task ahead of us and where cooperation of our two Organizations will be of significant importance.

Mr. Chairman,

Serbia and Montenegro, being in the post-accession phase in the Council of Europe, is determined to fully and duly implement commitments that it undertook. To confirm that, please allow me to briefly update Permanent Council about some relevant developments:

The significant progress has been made in the field of human and minority rights by ratification of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The preparation process for the ratification of European Social Charter is under way.

In the recent past, both the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Montenegro have taken considerable steps aimed at accelerating reforms in very important areas such as punitive and judicial legislation, criminal legislation, human rights and anti-corruption legislation, public administration reform. Parallel, we attach the same importance to the substantial security sector reform and full and effective civilian control of Army.

Fighting the organize crime, corruption and trafficking in human beings are of the particular interest for Serbia and Montenegro. Both republics are on a good track establishing independent mechanisms for tackling these phenomena emerged as products of the complex process of transition.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to stress our belief that the CoE has an important role to play in the Province of Kosovo providing necessary assistance in the implementation of the human rights standards laid down in European Convention on Human Rights, European Convention against torture and other relevant conventions as well. With its valuable and for decades lasting experience in strengthening the local-self government institutions, in synergy with the OSCE and other international actors involved, the CoE

may significantly help the decentralization process in Kosovo, the important issue that is on the agenda of the international community during the last couple of months.

Finally, we believe that CoE Secretary General Mr. Schwimmer has substantially contributed to the current positive development of the Organisation. His good understanding of the particular regional interests and needs marked the work of the CoE in the recent past. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors.