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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS

VIENNA

S T A T E M E N T

by Ambassador Gilbert Galanxhi in response to the Address by the Minister of
Foreign Affairs of Serbia, H.E. Vuk Jeremic

702th OSCE Permanent Council

Vienna, 19 February 2008

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

First of all, allow me to state that Albania fully agrees with the European Union statement, but I am going to read a statement on my national capacity.

Distinguished Mr. Minister Jeremic,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Democracy Works!”

These were the opening and closing words of the first senior US politician to visit Albania back in 1991, State Secretary James Baker; and we Albanians believed in those magic words. I can assure you, even the most non-believers, that: Democracy Works.

Here we are today to witness the correction of an historic accident of 1913, when, speaking in high-tech terminology, Kosova was *Selected, Copied* and *Attached* to Serbia. Kosova and Kosovar people (Dardania and Dardans) were there, on their own land many centuries before the disciples of Jesus Christ preached Christianity and built temples and churches on their land. They were there, on Albanian land, when teaching Octavian Augustus – Emperor of Rome – the art of governance and war. Were the Serbs in Balkans by that time?

But I think it is time to look ahead and not behind, so that we can forget once and forever Srebenica and Raçak.

Dear friends,

Let's call a spade a spade and be open, realistic and contemporary. We have heard so often in the last two days the word "*never*" to be pronounced, sometimes with hurt emotions and sometimes with mixed feelings. It reminds me of a notorious slogan used by the Albanian communist leaders until the very last days of the dictatorship: "We Albanians will eat even grass, but will *never, never* betray the principles of Marxism, Leninism and Stalinism".

Of course, we Albanians were not caws to eat grass, and rightly and wisely embraced the slogan "Democracy Works" instead.

Kosovar people have been good citizens of Yugoslavia (not of Serbia) until they experienced very, very gross human rights abuses and were treated as second and third-class citizens. That's why they, too, embraced the slogan "democracy works". They are determinately and definitively in the same time-zone with Vienna and Brussels, not only geographically, but politically as well. Time works for Democracy and Integration.

Mr. Chairman,

It is much better and much more constructive to avoid charged emotions, and look into the future with courage and optimism. Let's consider February 17th as, firstly, the end-day of an unhappy arranged marriage between Serbia and Kosova and, secondly, as the beginning-day of two individual, independent states seeking integration into the great family of democracies embodied in the EU. This, and only this, has always been and is the position of my Government with regard to the long-term solution of the Kosova issue, as well as the long-term stability in the region. President Ahtisaari's Package is the most reasonable and realistic solution serving this purpose.

It is not wise to hide behind some “grammar exercise” to solve a legal puzzle, at a time when we witness a crystal-clear reality: the independent Republic of Kosova, founded on the sacred International Principle of Self-Determination of its own freedom-loving people, and now internationally recognized.

Deep in our hearts we have always believed in James Baker’s words: DEMOCRACY WORKS. I take advantage of this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank all the democratic states that have officially recognized the Republic of Kosova, and so intend to do in the future, as well as to thank them for enlightening the way for us towards DEMOCRACY and Euro-Atlantic integration. So, let’s give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Kosova people **deserved independence**, so they justly won it. It is in the honour of the Republic of Serbia to recognize this new reality, just as it has recognized other similar realities in the non-too-distant past; and build the future of the inter-state relations upon democratic principles and standards, upon friendly and cooperative relations, upon reciprocal respect for human rights and freedoms.

Democracy Works and Will Continue to Work; we simply can’t stop it. The only element of management that cannot be stopped is Time. Time works for Democracy, and this is the foundation stone for our organization: The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. All our efforts serve and should always serve Democracy.

The Albanian Government has welcomed the maturity of the current political leaders of Serbia to use only diplomatic and political means, as well as welcomes the stance that the Serbian minority population stays in Kosova. As declared by the Prime Minister of Kosova (in Albanian and Serbian language), Kosova will be a multi-ethnic country with guaranteed respect for human rights and freedoms for all its citizens. I believe, it is high time for Serbia and some other participating states to show real seriousness and care for Democracy and Human Rights of the Serbian, Albanian and other non-Albanian population of Kosova, by giving full concession and full consensus to our, I stress it, to our OSCE Mission in Kosova.

The Albanian Government fully believes that the OSCE Mission in Kosova has done an excellent job. My Government remains consistent in its position that the continuation of the OSCE Mission in Kosova is indispensable and needed for the benefit of all citizens of the Republic of Kosova without any distinction.

Distinguished participants in this special Permanent Council meeting!

Wise men say that 'Time is the best remedy for healing hurt feelings'. It holds true for Love and Hatred. I believe they are right. When all this tense atmosphere of charged emotions will have faded away, suddenly we will notice that there have been no losers, but only winners. The peoples of Kosova and of Serbia will have lost for sure "a century of problematic relations", but are going to win the European perspective. Generations and generations to come will thank today's politicians for this perspective.

Allow me Mr. Chairman, to close my speech by repeating the opening and closing words of James Baker: **Democracy Works.**

God bless democracy!

Thank you Mr. Chairman