



PC.DEL/746/08  
10 September 2008

ENGLISH only

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY  
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MICHAEL W. BANACH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE,  
AT THE 731<sup>st</sup> (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

**10 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**RE: ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SERBIA,  
H.E. MR. VUK JEREMIĆ**

Mr. Chairman:

1. The Delegation of the Holy See warmly welcomes H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his reflections.
2. As is known, it is not the place of the Holy See to enter into issues of a strictly political nature. Neither does it wish to do so. Nevertheless, my Delegation has followed, and will continue to follow with great attention the question of the church of the Holy Trinity in Djakovica, in line with the commitment of the Holy See to promote respect for every person and for religious freedom, as well as for all holy places.
3. Religious patrimony is intimately linked to cultural patrimony and forms an inalienable part of civilization in every land. The preservation of holy places and monuments thus constitutes an important inheritance for future generations; it also serves as a stimulus for reconciliation – in truth and with respect for all.
4. The Holy See continues to consider the promotion of dialogue and tolerance among all those who live in Kosovo and who belong to different religions and traditions as absolutely essential. The Serbian minority there also has the right to protect what belongs to its own cultural and religious identity, as well as to be protected from intolerance and discrimination.

5. In this spirit, the Holy See encourages all parties involved in the dispute over the church of the Holy Trinity in Djakovica to protect the holy nature of the place and to act in a way that unites, rather than in a way that divides. Safeguarding religious and cultural patrimony is, in fact, one of the conditions necessary for healing the open wounds in Kosovo and for favouring reconciliation among its inhabitants. As a result, such true respect will constitute a factor that the international community and our Organization will welcome in the evolution of the socio-political situation in that region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman!