



**STATEMENT BY MS. MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
AMBASSADOR OF SERBIA,
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS OF
H.E. MR LUIS AMADO,
MINISTER OF STATE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PORTUGAL
AND PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,
AT THE 675th MEETING OF
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

12 July 2007

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the delegation of Serbia allow me first to very warmly welcome to the Permanent Council H.E. Mr Luis Amado, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of Portugal, in his capacity as the President of the Council of the European Union and thank him for his inspiring and thoughtful address.

Serbia participated in the regional statement of the SAP countries and, of course, fully shares its intentions, views and visions. We would like, however, to add a few words in our national capacity, since Minister Amado addressed the Kosovo process as one of the major causes of concern for the Portuguese Presidency and, as he said, for the whole of Europe.

Indeed, the Kosovo process is an issue concerning the whole of Europe - it concerns its very foundations, its principles and values. It is about peaceful conflict resolution, peacebuilding, confidence-building, reconciliation, dialogue, the rule of law, human rights, democratic standards, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and many other things.

From the beginning of the Kosovo process Serbia was arguing for a negotiated and agreed settlement of the issue and continues to do so. Since there are ongoing discussions in the United Nations Security Council, as well as within the European Union about how, when and why to resume negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, allow me to very briefly outline once more the main features of the Serbian proposal of a very wide and substantial autonomy for Kosovo, in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244, in order to show that there is much room for compromise and that further talks are possible and needed.

First, according to the Serbian proposal Kosovo will be vested with legislative, executive and judicial powers that will make the province fully self-governing, except for a number of explicitly defined areas as are *foreign policy, defence* (with full demilitarization of the province and an interim international military presence), *border control, monetary and customs policy*, the *protection of Serbian religious and cultural heritage*, and the *judicial protection of human rights in the ultimate resort*. Everything else will be under the control of Kosovo institutions, with no interference from Belgrade.

Second, the proposed constitutional arrangement would be internationally guaranteed and would be renegotiable after, for instance, twenty years. Thus, the Kosovo Albanians need not feel that, under some changed set of circumstances, they might find themselves threatened by Belgrade. International guarantees will be there permanently, and – at least for an initial period, before political reconciliation becomes more than a distant goal – an international presence, both civilian and military.

Third, Serbia is willing to discuss arrangements that would allow Kosovo an essentially independent access to International Financial Institutions. Such arrangements are unusual in the case of entities that are not sovereign, independent states, but they are not unknown. There are good reasons for Kosovo to become another case of this kind.

Fourth, the Kosovo Albanians are to be given a very significant political choice – to participate in the political life of Serbia according to their wishes. Under the constitutional arrangement just described, the ties of Kosovo with Belgrade would be designed in such a way that there would be no need, and thus no justification, for the province to be fully represented politically in either the Serbian parliament or the Serbian government. In that case, provisions would have to be made for special Kosovo representation in the Serbian government where necessary (as for example in foreign policy) or, as required, in other central institutions such as the National Bank of Serbia. If, on the other hand, there would be willingness on the Albanian side to be fully represented in the political institutions on the central level, the exceptionally wide autonomy specified above would have to be redefined. In that case, Kosovo would have to be more fully integrated into Serbia on the model of various constitutional arrangements familiar to us from other countries, for example from Spain. Serbia is ready for that, as well.

Fifth, as explicitly stated in the Serbian Status Platform made public in May 2006, Serbia is willing for the special EU tracking mechanism for Kosovo to continue, in suitable coordination with Belgrade. In fact, such a coordinated Belgrade-Pristina

effort would probably bring Kosovo much sooner into the EU than any other alternative.

Mr. Chairman,

This brief outline should make clear that Serbia is offering a genuine and sustainable political compromise. The Kosovo Albanians would be fully self-governing in most of their affairs and protected from any illegitimate interference from Belgrade. Serbia, on the other hand, would fully safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity and, under arrangements that Belgrade has proposed in the Vienna negotiations (on decentralization, protection of the Serbian religious and cultural heritage, etc.), Serbs and other non-Albanians living in Kosovo would have their rights and normal living conditions restored, their property protected, and their churches and monasteries safe.

In order to reach a compromise, Mr. Chairman, the international community, in particular the European Union and the OSCE, can support the much-needed dialogue between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, between Belgrade and Pristina substantially by a variety of confidence-building and reconciliation measures and by a comprehensive economic recovery programme. Poverty, Mr. Chairman, still is one of the main causes of ethnic and political tensions.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, allow me to wish Minister Amado sincerely the very best for a successful European Union Presidency.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman