



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA TO THE OSCE,
IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA,
H.E. MR. GORDAN JANDROKOVIĆ,
AT THE 779th MEETING OF
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 November 2009

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Madame Chair,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Serbia I would like to warmly welcome the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Croatia, H.E. Mr. Gordan Jandroković, to the Permanent Council and thank him for his address. Let me underline that Serbia shares and welcomes many of the political and strategic considerations outlined by Minister Jandroković in his speech.

Madame Chair,

Among the foreign policy priorities, that Serbia and Croatia undoubtedly have in common, are the accession to the European Union and regional cooperation. This is why Serbia welcomes and supports every progress and success of every individual country in our region with respect to EU integration processes. And this is why we believe that – in the context of the overarching progress of South-Eastern Europe as a whole – regional cooperation is of key importance, in particular with view of those issues that require regional solutions. The Republic of Serbia strives to contribute to the solution of regional problems in a most constructive way. Take our readiness and initiative to organize a regional conference in Belgrade that would be dedicated to the solution of the refugee issues in the region, as exemplary for such an attitude. As refugee issues are human rights issues we are convinced that every single refugee fate deserves a fair solution, irrespective of whether he or she opted to return or stay in the receiving country. In this regard we are surprised that Croatia is challenging facts and

figures presented by the European Union, and would like to remind that issues of tenancy rights, convalidation of working years and others have not been solved in all signatory countries of the Sarajevo Declaration and remain open.

Madame Chair,

We firmly believe that the OSCE plays an important role in our individual and regional efforts to reach our foreign policy objectives, by offering our countries support and expertise in achieving the highest democratic standards. *The* important operational mechanism for this are the field presences, that, according to our firm conviction, should continue their activities until their mandates are completely fulfilled. OSCE field presences should not be considered as a stigma, but as very valuable and practical tools for facilitating complex reform processes.

Let me single out, Madame Chair, just one example, where the OSCE can still make a difference in our region. I am talking about war crimes proceedings. - It is obvious that our countries have made notable progress in the conduct of domestic war crimes proceedings. In this regard we highly welcome the efforts of the Government, the prosecutor and the judiciary of the Republic of Croatia, undertaken in the recent past, in particular with view of the revision of trials in-absentia. Serbia, on her part, expresses the readiness and openness of her judicial bodies, in particular the prosecution, to deepen bilateral and regional cooperation with respect to war crimes proceedings, at least to the same extent to which such a cooperation successfully works in fighting organized crime commonly.

In this context, we believe that more transparency with respect to ongoing proceedings for about 1200 persons would enable relevant Serbian authorities to support their Croatian counterparts in the conduct of these investigations. The OSCE Office in Zagreb and the Mission in Serbia could and should cooperate closer on this issue, also as a kind of facilitator. We believe as well, that Croatia will enhance its efforts when it comes to un-prosecuted war crimes, keeping pace with the present momentum, to which the Office in Zagreb refers to in its latest Status Report, so that the Office in its next report will be able to confirm its sustainability.

In closing, Madame Chair, let me reiterate Serbia's readiness for constructive cooperation to the benefit of all our countries in the region of South-Eastern Europe and beyond, and let me wish Minister Jandroković the best for the challenges ahead.

Thank you, Madame Chair.