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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 Gilbetrt Galanxhi in response to the Address by the Minister for Foreign
Affairs of Slovenia, H.E. Dr. Dimitrij Rupel
697th OSCE Permanent Council
Vienna, 24 January 2008

Thank you Mr. Chairman!

Please allow me Your Excellency, Mr. Minister Rupel, that on behalf of the Albanian Government to congratulate You personally and your Government as well, for the tangible record of successes that your country has achieved in such a short period of very interesting and intensive democratic developments in our common OSCE area. On the other hand, it is with great pleasure that we notice that the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU are fully in line with the expectations of the Albanian Government, as well as of the democracy-loving Albanians wherever they live and work in this ever growing democratic OSCE space.

I assure You Mr. Minister, that my Government will be fully supportive of all your ambitious goals and objectives, as well as a very loyal partner in all your initiatives and projects, for enhancing and increasing that which is the corner-stone and the real meaning of the existence of the EU and OSCE – the SECURITY and COOPERATION.

Mr. Minister, my Government strongly believes that there are no losers in this noble game; there are only victors: they are the common people of our countries, who all wake up in the

morning with the hope of a better day and a better tomorrow; trying to wipe out of their memory the food-for-thought sequences and consequences of “The Day After”.

I take advantage of this opportunity to emphasize, very briefly, that Albania has been fully engaged and committed in the last years to meet the requirements and deadlines deriving from the Stabilization and Association Agreement. The Government has undertaken a series of courageous reforms and is continuing steadily on this path. The legislation reform has been very successful and, as commented by our international partners and interlocutors, Albania has a well-drafted and harmonious legal package, compatible with the EU standards. The strengthening of the democratic institutions in the country has been another priority of my Government, which has resulted in a visible strengthening of the rule of law, thanks to a zero-tolerance policy towards organised crime and criminal activities. The excellent cooperation with Interpol and Europol, as well as with all our neighbouring countries’ specialised agencies is viewed as a meaningful input for the security situation in the country.

Thanks to the EU and US assistance, the Border Control and Integrated Border Management has improved significantly. The Total Information Management System (TIMS) is in place and functioning in all border check points. The Government, with the assistance of EU and OSCE, is ready to produce Hi-Tech ID Cards and Passports for the Albanian citizens, which fully comply with the highest international standards. We believe that this should constitute a decisive step for full liberalisation of visa regime policy for Albanian citizens.

As far as the economic reforms are concerned, we are conscientious that we have a lot to do ahead of us, but at the same time I feel proud to confirm that Albania will continue to have an estimated growth of 6% even for 2008, thanks to the very courageous reforms undertaken so far, and thanks to the very pro-Euro-Atlantic integration spirit of the Albanian people, whose average age is only 31, a decisive element that your Presidency, as well as the others to come, should not neglect and should consider as a vital driving force for the establishment of democratic values and principles. Please, use your Presidency Mr. Minister to give Hope and Vision to these generations.

I could not dare to continue further Mr. Minister without thanking the EU Slovenian Presidency, as well as the OSCE Finish Presidency, for ranking high in both your agendas

the resolution of the final status of Kosova. As we all know now, the numerous efforts to solve this issue through the UN Security Council have produced no concrete result, leaving no way to the legitimately and democratically elected Government of Kosova other than a unilateral proclamation of independence and full implementation of President Ahtisaari's Package.

The Albanian Government believes that the universal right of self-determination is fully applicable in Kosova's case. Kosova has been part of a state which does not exist anymore, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We are not witnesses of any other precedent when a freedom - loving people has asked permission from its oppressor and aggressor to live in peace and freedom. This has never happened and will never happen. As I mentioned in the opening of my speech, there will be no losers out of this democratic development in our so-often turmoiled area.

The Albanian Government believes that the continuation of the *status-quo* is unjustified and dangerous; as well as it believes that the future of a democratic Serbia and a democratic independent Kosova is in the EU. This, and only this, will produce long-term Stability, long-term Security and long-term Cooperation in the region and beyond; and we highly appreciate and welcome the EU concrete engagement for definitively solving the status of Kosova.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last but not least, better saying the most important, allow me to remind you of our latest Retz experience and the wonderful remarks/synthesis made by a distinguished colleague of ours: an EU open-borders perspective has produced real, visible, steady prosperity for Retz people, and, I fully believe, will continue to produce prosperity for any nation that believes in this vision. Isn't that what we all are looking for? Isn't that what we hope our children will look for?

We all should have "a vision", as Slovenia had in its first days of being an independent state, only a few years ago; and here we are today, all being proud of Slovenia and the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, with no exception.

God bless democracy! And Good luck to both Presidencies!

Thank you Mr. Chairman.