

Serbia — Five Years After

Speech delivered by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro, Ambassador Maurizio Massari, at an international conference organized by the Balkan Trust for Democracy and the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence to mark the 5th anniversary of the fall of the Milosevic regime, and held in Belgrade, 5 October 2005.

The evolution of Serbia in the last 5 years reflects substantial progress in the process of democratic transition. We have an electoral democracy firmly rooted in SaM; the roots of pluralism have been firmly planted; freedom of speech and individual freedoms have been consolidated; minority rights are protected. The country's international position has dramatically improved, through its reintegration into the international community (CoE, OSCE). The EU process has also started, whereas PfP/NATO integration is still on hold because of the still unresolved "Mladic case".

What needs to be done to move the process forward? There are five main factors needed to help move the process further:

- 1.** The completion of cooperation with Hague is crucial to SaM's move towards the EU and NATO. But this is not the end of the story. Moreover, in the future post-Mladic era, Serbia will have to handle effectively domestic war crimes and continue the process of coming to terms with its historical past in order to better enter the future. This is crucial especially for the young generation. OSCE has supported many NGO activities in this area, and more recently, institutions too. The OSCE Mission supported the public awareness campaign on the need to cooperate with ICTY run by the Human and Minority Rights Minister Rasim Ljajic. We shall launch a project "facing the future" to encourage debate among Serbian students.

You (Serbian citizens) and only you can be the owners of such debate. The International Community can only help facilitate such debate wherever possible.

2. & 3. Besides war crimes and coming to terms with past, the establishment and implementation of the Rule of Law and the creation of self-sustainable economic development are and will remain crucial issues for SaM for many years ahead.

The Rule of Law and economic development are not only crucial for SaM to join the EU/PfP, but also as key domestic goals to make Serbia a competitive, fully democratic nation-state. Internal reforms will legitimize the foreign policy aspirations. While the EU process provides a unique, crucial framework of modernization, legislative reforms and stability, it is up to the member states, including aspirant members, to pursue – within such a framework – those reforms that can make their respective countries viable and competitive on the European and world markets. Self-sustaining system of competent governance, including administrative reform, transparent privatization, anti-corruption strategies, law enforcement, legislative and taxation system that attract FDI and unleash private enterprise are absolutely crucial. Full democratization of power structures – such as army, police and security services, is also of essential value.

The establishment of the rule of law and fostering of conditions for economic development are problems not only for Serbia, but for the entire region. And how do we define the region? How does Serbia compare to the other countries in the region? South East Europe (SEE) is not exactly like the Central Eastern Europe (CEE). GDP per capita in SEE countries, with the exception of Croatia, is around \$2,500. Croatia with \$8,000 is closer to CEE countries, but economically still very far from the advanced EU democracies (\$30,000 GDP per capita).

3. & 4. Another two crucial challenges for Serbia are a) democratic unity and b) regional cooperation.

As I have said, the democratic transition, though not linear, has so far been all in all positive. Could it have gone faster? Yes, particularly if democratic forces had been more united. Unfortunately this was not the case. There is still a hard core of nationalist/conservative forces in Serbia who are less enthusiastic about Euro and Euro-Atlantic integration. Such resistance can be effectively overcome only through

unity of democratic forces. Democratic parties should put asides personal differences and rivalries and work together for the European project.

Regional reconciliation is also crucial. This year marks not only the 5th anniversary of October 2000, but also of Srebrenica and the Dayton Peace Accords. Regional approach and regional cooperation in the region are yet not sufficiently developed. State-to-state relations have dramatically improved, but there is still too much mutual mistrust and pent up resentments. The process of the reconciliation provides the room to improve further political and human solidarity and cooperation in the region. Such reconciliation and cooperation is also a pre-condition for regional economic development. Unless the region as a whole picks up it is difficult that the economies of the Western Balkan countries – whose dimensions are certainly not large – will grow dramatically. This is true for Serbia, and for all. I hope that SEE countries closer to the EU such as Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia will set the example and encourage regional cooperation, rather than falling into the illusory temptation of trying to distance themselves at any cost from the region.