

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA TO THE
UNITED NATIONS**

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STATEMENT

by

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and Metohija

at the Security Council meeting on 19 March 2007

New York

Mr. President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly pleased to be able to greet you today and express to this august body of the world Organization my heartfelt appreciation.

Today's meeting of the Security Council is held immediately after the conclusion of the failed talks about the future status of the province of Kosovo and Metohija, held in Vienna on 10 March. There are numerous reasons for the unsuccessful conclusion of these negotiations and I shall say more about that later.

At the outset, I would like to point out that the Republic of Serbia firmly believes that the decisions of the United Nations Security Council will have a crucial impact on durable peace and security not only in my country, but also worldwide. Many eyes are turned today upon the Western Balkans, because a number of sovereign and democratic countries are in fear of a possible precedent that would breach the fundamental principle of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of internationally recognized states. Therefore, I would like to stress the special importance of the Security Council as a guarantor of the implementation of the UN Charter. This body is entrusted with the task of ensuring the respect and maintenance of the universal principles of international law. This implies that it is the body on which the stability of the overall international order depends. Serbia expresses its firm conviction that the UN SC, in observance of the UN Charter, will reject every attempt to take away from the Republic of Serbia, a UN member state, 15 percent of its territory and to change its internationally recognized borders, without its consent.

You are all well aware of the fact that the Vienna talks about the future status of the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija were unsuccessful. They failed to yield any result, because no agreement was reached. Let me remind you that the mandate of Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari was to act as a mediator in pursuit of a compromise solution. Instead, by overstepping the mandate, Special Envoy Mr. Ahtisaari has opted for the imposition of a solution which suits the purpose of only one, Albanian side.

It is also important to underline that Mr. Ahtisaari's proposal has not been formulated as a compromise negotiated solution by the two sides. None of the almost 500 amendments that the Serbian side submitted to Mr. Ahtisaari's draft document has been accepted. In other words, this is leading to the imposed solution, which is in violation of the UN Charter, UN SC resolution 1244, the Helsinki Final Act and the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. I shall take the liberty of asking what the countries that you represent would do if they received such a proposal. We all know the answers to these questions. Serbia's final answer is well-known and clear, and it reads – we reject the proposal which takes away 15 percent of our territory.

Mr. President,

The Government of my country remains firmly convinced that the Security Council will consistently adhere to the UN Charter, thus enabling genuine negotiations on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija to begin, with a new mediator in the negotiations. Serbia is of the opinion that a new round of negotiations is the only path towards a just and sustainable solution. We are ready for a compromise about the future status of the province of Kosovo and Metohija. We would also like to take this opportunity to stress that the Republic of Serbia is willing to ensure the highest degree of autonomy for the Albanian community in Kosovo and Metohija and to provide substantial autonomy for the province. Substantial autonomy is certainly the most promising way for the Albanian national minority in the province to manage its future.

I specially want to underline that in recent days Serbia has marked three years from the violence of Albanian terrorists and separatists, who, on 17 and 18 March 2004, sought to complete the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo and Metohija. And while UNSC resolution 1244 sets out absolutely clear obligations and standards that have to be met, the life of the Serbs and other non-Albanians in the province is marked by violence and a permanent threat of terror by Albanian separatists. We all know that so far no one has presented a single argument why the Albanians should create another Albanian state in the territory of Serbia. Given that it is impossible to find such an argument, since it would be in direct breach of the principles of international law, there have already been announcements, vocal and public, that Albanian terrorists will repeat the scenario of three years ago, when on

17 March they killed Serbs and burnt and destroyed everything that was of the Serbian origin in the province.

Serbia would like to point out here in the UN SC to these threats by Albanian separatists and terrorists in a timely fashion and request that the UN SC takes all the measures aimed at ensuring the compliance with UNSC resolution 1244, which guarantees peace and security to all the inhabitants of the province. Particularly inadmissible is the possibility to shift the responsibility for the announced violence by Albanian terrorists to somebody else and say that it is not the terrorists who are to be blamed, but the victims, because they failed to voluntarily meet the demands of the terrorists. No one has the right today to turn the head away from the reality and refuse to condemn, while there is still time, the threat of terror loud and clear. There are no differences when it comes to terror and terrorism, irrespective of whether they take place in Kosovo or any other part of the world. It is the obligation of the UN SC to warn that resolution 1244 has to be observed and that any sort of violence will be most severely punished.

There is ample evidence that UNSC resolution 1244 is being violated as a matter of routine and that violence against Serbs and other non-Albanians is committed on a daily basis. Thus, 52 ethnically motivated attacks on Serbs or members of non-Albanian communities were committed in Kosovo and Metohija in the past four months alone. In 22 of them, the targets of the extremists were returnee Serbs or their property. The attacks were carried out mainly in the territory of northern Metohija. Violence against the inhabitants of Priluzje near Vučitrn was announced in leaflets in advance. Some members of the special Kosovo Protection Force unit "Rosa" threatened the villagers of Štrpce on Mt. Brezovica, thus taking part in systematic intimidation. Intimidation is also evident in central Kosovo, in the north, in Orahovac and Kosovsko Pomoravlje. The Albanian daily papers publish lists of unwelcome Serbs. Their names were also published on billboards. Threats are made with the aim of compelling the Serbs to flee on a massive scale. Religious facilities of the Serbian Orthodox Church in seven cases were desecrated and damaged. I shall cite the example of the desecration of the Serbian church of St. John the Baptist in Peć on 5 March 2007. This church had been damaged in the March 2004 pogrom against Serbs. Rebuilt with the funds of the Council of Europe, it was desecrated all over again. Mr. Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe warned that if the culture of violence does not stop all the communities in Kosovo and Metohija will become the hostages of violence.

Especially serious concern is caused by the reemergence of people in black uniforms, who do not belong to any official formation in Kosovo and Metohija. They are members of paramilitary units, who illegally stop cars, carry out searches, inquire nationality of people, abduct and beat Serbs. In the period from 6 to 9 March alone, Serbs from Čaglavica and Laplje Selo were victims of the violence and plunder by these paramilitary units on a number of occasions. Slaviša Stolić, Dejan Mitić, a teacher, and Zoran Dragović, a worker, were victims of those attacks. Similarly, in Čaglavica, four masked persons abducted and robbed Zdenko Gorše, a worker, who distributes the Serbian-language press.

Let me reiterate that all the above occurred in only three days, but that these attacks, just like many other tragic events, did not have any impact on UNMIK's assessment according to which "the security situation and the freedom of movement are stable, but fragile." Only the language of bureaucratic indifference can reconcile the contradiction in terms of the coexistence of stable but fragile situation in Kosovo and Metohija. After the loss of two lives of Albanian protesters in the recent demonstrations in Pristina, Minister of Home Affairs of the Provisional Institutions submitted his resignation. However, during the seven and half years, 931 Serbs have been killed, no perpetrator has been convicted and no resignation has been tendered. Still, ladies and gentlemen, regardless of all the efforts made by the administration to mitigate the harsh reality in Kosovo and Metohija and blur it with almost poetic license, it keeps recording black pages of deaths, pain and wounds.

The greatest concern is, of course, caused by the issue of return of internally displaced persons. It is a well-known fact that hundreds of thousands of Serbs were expelled from Kosovo and Metohija, as well as that the ethnic structure of the population in the province was dramatically changed in the twentieth century. We also know that in the 1960s Serbs accounted for 30 percent of the province's population. That number has been extremely reduced, due to the actions of separatists, pressures on Serbs and their expulsion. This is eloquent proof that the project of an ethnically pure Kosovo underpins the idea of independent Kosovo. It is the key reason why separatists and extremists, under the very eye of the international mission in the province, systematically prevent the return of internally displaced persons from Serbia and intimidate the Serbs who are still there.

According to the UNHCR data, in 2006, only 1,608 persons returned, of whom Serbs and Roma accounted for 31 and 54 percent respectively. The number of returnees is lower than in 2005, but even such a low number of 1,608 returnees is not accurate. The most recent example is an attempt of seventy-five families to return to the village of Babuš under the auspices of provisional Kosovo institutions. They were included in the sustainable return project, which was supposed to comprise two components. One component was the reconstruction of houses, while the other one should have been guaranteeing economic sustainability, that is, the building of mini-farms that would generate income and provide livelihood to the returnees. The houses were indeed reconstructed, but the obligation related to ensuring economic sustainability of returnees was not fulfilled, although the funds for that particular purpose had been set aside. Seventy-five Serbian families returned the keys of their houses, because they do not have the other essential preconditions for survival. In the same time, there is a threat that their houses would be given to the social cases in the municipality. This is just one of many examples, which illustrates systematic expulsion of the once already expelled Serbs.

Regarding privatization carried out in Kosovo and Metohija, it is necessary to once again stress its ethnically-based discriminatory nature. Serbs are totally denied their fundamental rights. Serbs are practically prevented from exercising their property rights, as is the case with the state of Serbia, which is also denied this right. There is no single Serb at the helm of any public enterprise whatsoever. In eight years, Serbs have been expelled from Priština, the capital of the province, altogether and out of 41,000 that lived in Priština in 1999, there are less than a hundred of them now. They live in hiding and in conditions beneath human dignity. In the clinical hospital in that city about 50 percent of the employees were Serbs before the arrival of UNMIK; today there is no single Serbian employee.

Mr. President,

It is our joint obligation to review the issue of Kosovo and Metohija as required by United Nations Security Council resolution 1244. That resolution explicitly confirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Serbia, because no United Nations Security Council resolution may run counter the United Nations Charter. Furthermore, that resolution has also laid down clear-cut obligations that must be fulfilled in Kosovo and

Metohija. They are related to the standards, above all the rights of Serbs and other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija.

It is an easily verifiable truth that in all essential matters standards have not been met. We are just a few months away from the eighth anniversary of the arrival of international forces in Kosovo and Metohija. So, eight years have elapsed since the international community assumed responsibility for the implementation of the rule of law in Kosovo and Metohija.

It is of paramount importance to finally raise the question of honoring all the obligations arising from UNSC resolution 1244. That must be the basis for all our future talks. We simply have to objectively consider and determine what concretely has been done with respect to the standards and which commitments have not been honored and why. I particularly stress that, in all talks, we have to abide by UNSC resolution 1244, bearing in mind that Mr. Ahtisaari's proposal is completely in contravention of the resolution in force. His proposal does not meet any of the conditions, either in form or substance, to be discussed by the UN SC. It is a proposal which promotes solely the interests of the Albanian side and, more importantly, a proposal which directly violates the UN Charter. It is essentially important that precisely the commitments and conditions laid down in UNSC resolution 1244 set the direction of all further talks about the status of the province.

Pursuant to UNSC resolution 1244 we believe that the most important thing now is to introduce a model of substantial autonomy for the province of Kosovo and Metohija, as a fundamental issue in the new round of talks. It is necessary to responsibly and seriously explore the possibility for the system of government in the province to be based on true democratic foundations. It is a realistic and sustainable solution and, what is particularly important, it excludes the setting of a very dangerous precedent that would not only threaten peace and stability in the region, but also affect the overall international order.

The Government of Serbia strongly supports the initiative to continue the negotiating process. The Government of Serbia, Mr. President, also avails itself of this opportunity to urge dialogue and continuation of talks, genuine and detailed, conducted in good faith. Only such talks can result in a compromise and a negotiated solution, which will be in conformity with the UN Charter, and equally beneficial for both Serbs and Albanians and their shared future.