

**Remarks Before the Foreign Affairs Committee of
the European Parliament
by H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia,**

Strasbourg, 20 February 2008

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished MEPs,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I stand before you this afternoon as a proud European, and as an ashamed European.

Proud because my heritage, my culture, my beliefs, and my history bind me to a constellation of nations that, at the onset of the 21st century, reconciled themselves, and created something so magnificent that one could say: 'there has truly never been anything else like it in the history of the world.'

Winston Churchill equated the feeling I am trying to describe to you with a "sense of enlarged patriotism." That was his vision of Europe, and Jean Monet's vision of Europe, and Konrad Adenauer's vision of Europe. It is a vision I proudly share. For the peoples of Europe, between whom rivers of blood have flowed without mercy, chose to end the feuds of a thousand years. And they sought to eliminate from their shores a zero-sum approach to the conduct of regional politics.

How could I not be proud? How could I not, until just a few days ago, without the faintest shadow of a doubt, support the aspirations of my country to join the European Union, and therefore welcome the EU's commitment to the incorporation of Serbia and all the Western Balkans within its welcoming boundaries?

But I am also a deeply ashamed European. Tacitus wrote: *Deserta faciunt et pacem appellant*: "They create a desolation and they call it peace." That is what some European Union countries have done to the Republic of Serbia, to a small, peace-loving, democratic country in Europe, a founding member of the United Nations, an original signatory to the Helsinki Final Act, and a pillar of stability in Southeast Europe.

Creating desolation out of the promise of a European future. This is what the governments of some of your countries have done by recognizing the unilateral, illegal and illegitimate declaration of independence of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Serbia's southern province of Kosovo and Metohija.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am ashamed not as a Serb—for in the negotiating process on the future status of our province of Kosovo, we did nothing but demonstrate good faith and understanding for the legitimate rights of the other side. In fact, since the democratic overthrow of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic in October 2000, we have done almost everything right. We have overcome almost every obstacle. We have fulfilled almost every condition. We have embraced almost every standard. And we have taken on every challenge to our future with an optimism that thinkers like Alexis de Tocqueville thought had departed the Old Continent long ago.

I am ashamed as a European. As someone who knows in his heart that what has been done to Serbia is a fundamental violation of the very nature of not just the international system, but of the values that hold up the European construction.

I am ashamed, because if recognizing this act of ethnically-motivated secession from a democratic, European state is not wrong, then nothing is wrong.

I am ashamed, because I see how the bedrock of values that make us who we are is being trampled underfoot. Because I see how my fellow Europeans are trying to construct the future on a foundation of sand and rubble.

And I am ashamed, because for all the talk about reason and Enlightenment, for all the pious declinations on the common good and solidarity, Europe is rapidly becoming just another place where might makes right.

Some may say I have exaggerated. Well, let us turn to the matter at hand.

The institution with primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security is, according to the United Nations Charter, the Security Council. And, in 1999, following the 78-day bombing of my country, it adopted a resolution—still operative today—that conferred upon the UN the authority to administer Serbia's southern province of Kosovo, and explicitly and unambiguously reaffirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country. When Serbia was ruled by a tyrant, Kosovo was a confirmed part of Serbia.

It said so in Security Council Resolution 1244. And it went further than that. It placed a Chapter VII obligation—a binding obligation—on all the member-states of the United Nations to respect the borders of my country.

And now, when Serbia is a democracy, some European nations are prepared to recognize Kosovo as an independent state. They say, in effect, we did not punish the tyrant, but now we will punish a democracy—a European democracy—and we expect its citizens to take it.

They say Kosovo can be independent, while saying that 1244 in its entirety still applies, including, presumably, that part that reaffirms Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo. And they send an EU-led mission to our province without the approval of the Security Council, even though paragraphs 5 and 19 of 1244 make it abundantly clear that only the Security Council can do that.

And yesterday, at an emergency session of the Permanent Council, no European ambassador could explain to anyone with any degree of reason why what is being done to Serbia is not a violation of the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

They could not explain to me why what they are doing is not setting a dangerous, precedent that will create very troubling consequences to the stability of Europe and the whole world.

Recognizing the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence from Serbia legitimizes the doctrine of imposing solutions to ethnic conflicts.

It legitimizes the act of unilateral secession by a provincial or local entity.

It transforms the right to self-determination into an avowed right to independence.

It legitimizes the forced partition of internationally-recognized, sovereign states.

And it violates the commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes in Europe.

It even resurrects the discredited Cold War doctrine of limited sovereignty.

By the actions of some European Union member-states, every would-be ethnic or religious separatist across Europe and around the world has been provided with a tool kit on how to achieve recognition. Does anyone in this room think that the Kosovo Albanians are the only group in the world with a grievance against their capital?

Do any of you honestly think that just by saying that Kosovo is sui generis, you will make it so? That there will be no consequences to the stability and security of the international system, just because you say it won't?

Is this the way proud Europeans behave? Is this the way European values are put into

practice? Is this the way to treat friends?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Notwithstanding everything I have witnessed and all that my country has gone through, I have not lost faith in Europe, even though I am ashamed by the actions of some within it.

I have not lost faith in Europe because I still hold out a measure of hope that Europe will live up to its values; that Europe will pause for a moment and recall the principles that drive its own decision-making in Brussels and Strasbourg. I'm talking about compromise, concession, and consensus-building. That's how it works: by engaging in a process of deliberate, patient, and sustained, good-faith negotiations until a compromise is struck that all stakeholders can abide by.

In the case of Kosovo's future status, only a solution that is acceptable to the sides can be viable, sustainable, and lasting.

Only a negotiated solution can pave the way towards a common, European future.

Only such a solution can consolidate the regional gains made, reinforce the geo-strategic priorities achieved, and restore the drive for change in Southeast Europe.

The imposition of a one-sided outcome—the recognition of an independent Kosovo—does the opposite. It sets back the achievements of European visionaries in our region; it uncouples the Western Balkans from its future in Europe; and it fosters a view throughout the region that Europe is in the business of imposing outcomes.

This is where we are. It's a shameful place to be. And it's not where we should be.

Where we are is at the precipice, facing down into the shadows of uncertainty. Uncertainty over the future of the Western Balkans. Uncertainty over democracy in Serbia. Uncertainty over the safety of the Kosovo Serbs. And uncertainty over the fate of our holy sites—the central element of our national identity.

Yet we also face forward. We can see beyond the break, and beyond the discord. We can still see Europe for what it is, for what it can become, for what it can accomplish.

But also for what it can harm: the dreams of a proud, democratic, European country that has surmounted more obstacles since October 2000 than most other nations have in a hundred years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I assure you, with the fortitude of a unified nation, Serbia will not go quietly. We shall strive for what is just, for what we believe in, for our future, for what is rightfully ours.

The Republic of Serbia shall not tolerate this illegal act of secession. Our Government and National Assembly have declared this action by the authorities in Pristina null and void. And we shall undertake all diplomatic, political, measures designed to impede and reverse this direct and unprovoked attack on our sovereignty.

As a responsible member of the international community committed to the peaceful and negotiated resolution of disputes, the Republic of Serbia will not resort to the use of force. For violence cannot bring a peaceful settlement to any crisis. Violence only destroys—lives, property, hope, ambitions. It destroys everything and creates desolation.

We are for peace. We are for agreement. We are for concord. We are Europeans.

Kosovo shall remain a part of Serbia forever.

