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Mr. President,

Distinguished Guests,

Excellencies,

Dear Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to greet you warmly, and am honored to be the first Foreign Minister of the Republic of Serbia in history to visit this extraordinary country—a country that has traditionally offered an outstretched hand to all who seek peace in the world on the basis of mutual respect and benefit, equality, non-aggression, international stability, and friendship.

I want to assure you that Serbia is one such country, and will lay-out for you this morning the way we view the international system and our place in it, as well as discuss our relations with the friendly People’s Republic of China. I will then touch on our goal of attaining membership in the European Union, and spend time discussing Serbia’s approach to our region, Southeast Europe. I will also discuss the challenge of forging a compromise, mutually acceptable solution to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija, our southern province under United Nations administration since June 1999.

A few minutes ago I finished a thoughtful conversation with ambassador Ma Zhengang, the president of CIIS and our host for this event. It is always a great pleasure to meet someone who began his overseas diplomatic career in my country, back in 1970. It was then called Yugoslavia. We were in the very first wave of European countries to establish diplomatic

relations with the People’s Republic of China, back in 1955.

Since that time, unbroken by tectonic shifts in the international system and the breakup of Yugoslavia, our two countries have enjoyed a remarkably stable relationship. We have forged a true friendship—despite the thousands of kilometers that separate us. And when it counted, the people of China stood shoulder to shoulder with the people of Serbia: we mourned together when your embassy in Belgrade was attacked during the 1999 bombing of our country, and we were the beneficiaries of your generosity in the aftermath. We will never forget those difficult times, nor your support in our time of need.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

China has always looked to the future. With your long history, vast territory, and huge population, you have met adversity with hard work, bravery, resourcefulness, patience, indomitable spirit, and intellectual innovation. You suffered greatly during the Second World War, yet out of the ashes emerged the New China in 1949. Decades later, the 1978 adoption of reform and opening-up policies initiated by Deng Xiaoping—one of the very few statesmen who achieved his own predictions, as Henry Kissinger once characterized him—has propelled China onto the world stage as a strong factor of political stability, economic dynamism and social equality.

China’s embarking on the path of peaceful development, and your quest to build a harmonious society by putting people first, deserves deep admiration. I cannot help but notice that of all the permanent members of the UN Security Council, China has become the largest peacekeeping and law-enforcement contributor to UN missions around the world. China acts as it speaks, and thus follow the Chinese adage that “sincerity is the treasure of speech and the center of good conduct.”

Indeed, your achievements are truly unique in the annals of history. James Wolfensohn, formerly president of the World Bank, put it succinctly when he said that “the Chinese have gained achievements in only 20 years which would take many other countries two centuries to accomplish.” I read somewhere that in the next decade or so, if internal migration patterns continue, China will have to build a city the size of New York every four months—an almost impossible feat for any other country on earth. It is thus natural that rectifying both the rural-urban divide and regional disparities are issues your Government has indicated will remain top priorities. But your track record in overcoming challenges suggests that China will find a way to continue succeeding—with quiet pride and strength of purpose so characteristic of the East.

I was struck recently by the words of Premier Wen Jiabao, who spoke of creating a new community of common destiny through the fostering of a security environment of mutual trust and enduring stability. I believe that the construction of a future characterized in this way—a world of continuous reform and enhanced social justice, technological innovation and the respect for human rights—can provide a firm foundation for the further peaceful development of the entire planet.

So we will watch your progress and continue to support your One China policy, as well as other priorities that form the foundation of our bilateral relationship. And we will continue to find ways

in which we can actively deepen our cooperation with your country, and with all countries that seek to expand the comprehensive ties of friendship with the Republic of Serbia. We will do so from the vantage point of a country fully aware of the limits of our means, and carefully observant of the ways in which the world is changing.

It has become more interdependent, multipolar, and globalized. At the same time, the world community is, worryingly, less coherent, and less predictable. Humankind is therefore presented with a rare opportunity to develop in peace, but at the same time is faced with severe challenges. One such challenge is finding ways to clean up and protect the environment: sustained action must be taken to prevent climate change and pollution from working against the advances that humankind has made. A related one revolves around a whole host of energy-related matters, including buzzwords such as new technologies

or dependence. There is no way around these issues, and it is of paramount importance that we handle them in a most prudent way.

And a third challenge is the evolution of international security issues. As we know well, the dangers posed by conventional military threats have lessened. Yet dangers posed by unconventional ones—such as terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, ethnic and religious extremism, secessionism, and organized crime—have dramatically increased in recent times.

We must work together—developed and developing, North and South, West and East—to ensure a better, cleaner, and more secure world. A world of harmony, lasting peace, and common prosperity. All other approaches to the future would relegate us to an era of even more unbalanced economic development and great power rivalry. This is neither in the interest of the Serbian people, nor in the common interest of humankind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Serbia’s destiny lies in the European Union. Rapidly moving forward along the road to accession is the strategic priority of the Government of Serbia. In fact, the aspiration to join the European Union is a goal common to all the countries of Southeast Europe.

Serbia has always been a part of Europe: geographically, historically, strategically, and culturally. We form an integral part of European civilization, and it is our destiny to enter the institutional and political mainstream of Europe. We have mobilized the resources of our country to achieve this goal in the fastest possible timeframe, and expect to be ready for membership in 2012.

What I want to emphasize is that our eventual membership in the European Union will only strengthen our resolve to maintain a foreign policy based on the strict adherence to the founding documents of the international system and the European space—documents such as the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. The principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity must continue to form the firm foundation of how we relate to one another in the global arena—one that has produced a period of unprecedented growth, development, mutual respect, and peace in the world.

I also want to emphasize that our European accession will give a new meaning to Serbia’s bond of friendship with China. Not only will it deepen your access to the common European market, but I firmly believe that it will increase both understanding and cooperation between Beijing and Brussels.

Another key foreign policy priority is promoting friendly, cooperative, neighbourly relations among all the countries of Southeast Europe. Belgrade is the metropolitan centre of the region, and is thus naturally assuming a place of prominence in its affairs. Along with this geopolitical privilege comes responsibility, for our success promotes the success of the entire region—a region that suffered much in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In Southeast Europe, as in virtually all the other regions of the world, no one country’s development can succeed without that of others.

That is why we are devoting considerable efforts to ensuring that our regional policies reflect our core belief in the importance of promoting common values, mutual understanding, reconciliation, and development. That is why we are acting in a way that furthers stability and enhances prosperity in the region, and why we are working hard to lead the way in the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and good governance

Simply put, Serbia’s success ensures that the entire region will be propelled forward. But if the wrong moves are made, Serbia and its determined path

to development  
could suffer a fatal, generational blow. And if we falter, if we plunge back into a mindset  
reminiscent of our recent past, there is a real danger that  
Southeast Europe  
could get hurled back to the 1990s.  
The region could return to division and strife—and hatred, and conflict, and terrible misery.  
Stability would not take root, and prosperity would remain illusive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I speak of “wrong moves”, I speak of attempts by some in the international community to impose an outcome to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija that is unacceptable to Serbia—and not just Serbia. For a solution that would lead to the forcible partition of our country by recognizing the secessionist aspirations of Kosovo’s Albanians is tantamount to a course of action that goes against the very heart of the international system. It would establish a precedent affecting the stability of not only Southeastern Europe, but the security architecture of a number of other regions throughout the world.

Now, as you may know, our southern province of Kosovo and Metohija was put under United Nations administration by the Security Council, following the end of the 1999 NATO campaign, all the while clearly reaffirming the fact that Kosovo remained an integral part of our country.

Let us seek truth from facts, as Deng Xiaoping used to say. Kosovo’s Albanian secessionists seek independence, wrongly equating the legitimate right of self-determination with sovereignty and independence. A process of negotiations is underway, and we believe that the only way to consolidate national and regional stability is to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution. Only such a way forward will produce a result that is good for the region as a whole, a solution that will ensure sustainable, fast and harmonious economic growth and the political stability necessary to make it happen.

Clearly, there remains a significant gap between the current positions of Belgrade and Pristina. But if a real attempt at negotiating takes place—if both sides show a sincere willingness to bridge their differences for the sake of peace and reconciliation—then I sincerely believe that compromise can be reached.

A final point: However paradoxical as it may sound at first blush, *not* imposing deadlines on the negotiation process will likely lead to a more rapid settlement of Kosovo’s future status. For setting no firm deadlines concentrates minds by dis-incentivizing parties to simply wait out the clock, because waiting out the clock will not produce a solution that secures the region’s prosperous future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

China’s principled support of Serbia’s desire to forge a compromise, mutually-acceptable solution on Kosovo’s future status has been unwavering, and it will not be forgotten. It has deepened our friendship, and brought us closer together, in much the same way as has our common position on Taiwan.

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The last time I went to my ancestral village in central Serbia, an old man said something that stopped me in my tracks. After I repeated it to someone who knows a little more about China than I do, I was told that you too have a similar saying. In your version it goes like this: “Loyalty is the centre of virtues, sincerity their consolidator, and modesty their foundation.”

It is this common way of understanding the human condition that binds us to one another, Serbs and Chinese. This realization increased my genuine desire to come here, to learn from you, to better understand your culture, your development, and your contribution to world affairs. But I can say already that I will make return trips, and that I will do all in my power to increase the breadth and the depth of our bilateral, mutually-beneficial, friendly relationship.

Thank you very much for your attention.

