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Excellencies,

Dear Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Another thing that we have in common is the heritage of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the enlighteners and evangelists of the Slavs. They passed through here just as they passed

through my country, leaving a permanent mark on the character of our ancestors. Their	
accomplishments continue to provide the thread that has woven a fabric of understanding	Q
between our two peoples for a very long time.	

The character of our nations has also been formed by another common feature, the Danube. This mighty river flows through our capital cities, capturing the profound sense of shared destiny which unites all the nations that have been touched by its majesty. Bratislava was even called Istropolis, meaning Danube City in Greek, during the Renaissance. Our river has been a constant, vigilant witness to the ebb and flow of European history.

And it is history—or perhaps more accurately—historical change—that is the main theme of my remarks to you this afternoon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Serbia today, we hear history's whisper, just as the people of Bratislava did in 1988 during the *sviečkova demonštracia* or the Candle Demonstration—just as our people did on October 5^t

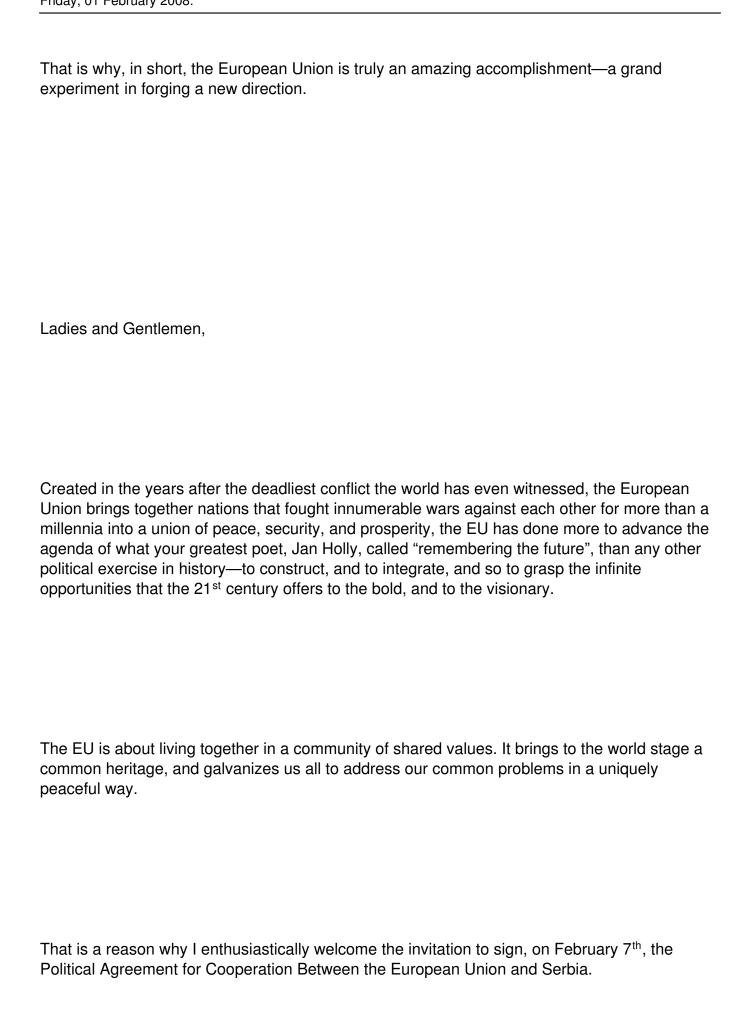
This is natural, for times of historical choice are in fact moments in which the dreams and

demons of a society are ventilated. But it is also a moment in which the political leadership is tested to contain the demons and to give substance to the dreams—to remind those who have forgotten what it was like in our part of the world during the 1990s, and how it has been since: far from perfect, but immeasurably better.

I deeply believe that our citizens will make the responsible choice when they cast their vote the day after tomorrow. I strongly believe they will choose to embrace the promise of a better life—that they will choose to walk through Serbia's open door to Europe, bringing untold prosperity not only to our country but to all the Western Balkans.

Starting Monday, with victory secured in Serbia's Referendum on Europe, together, Serbs, Slovaks, and all other European nations can begin to implement the final stage in fulfilling the dream of generations of making our continent whole, free and at peace.

That is what the European Union is really about. It's the antidote to isolation, protectionism, fear, extremism, and war. It brings us together, expands our markets, points to a more prosperous tomorrow, solidifies the gains made, and teaches us how to solve our differences in line with the enlightened aspirations of humankind, instead of giving in to our basest instincts.



It's that our subjugation cut us off from our common European civilization. Our lands were considered beyond the frontier of Europe. And then, in the 19th and 20th centuries, we worked very, very hard to be accepted once more into the European family of nations. We succeeded, at mind-boggling human and material cost. Sometimes we made mistakes as we walked down the path history had laid out for us. But we made it.

And then the 1990s took it all away.

But now we have a chance to restore our dignity not only as Serbs and democrats—but as Europeans. We get to *belong*, we get to remember the future, to come back to Jan Holly's words.

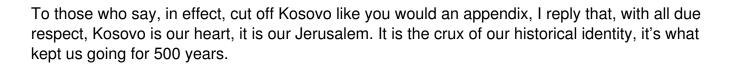
This sense of belonging—of returning to the European cradle, of not just remembering but *assu ring*

our future—is something that is of vital importance for the consolidation of our identity.

This short-sighted approach by some outside actors to the drama of the Western Balkans could, far from weaving us into the mainstream fabric of contemporary Europe, tear us away from the prospect of closing the book of strife and conflict for good.

Let me tell you why.

It is impossible to over-state the emotional impact that the forcible partition of Serbia—which is what the independence of Kosovo is tantamount to—would have on our citizenry.



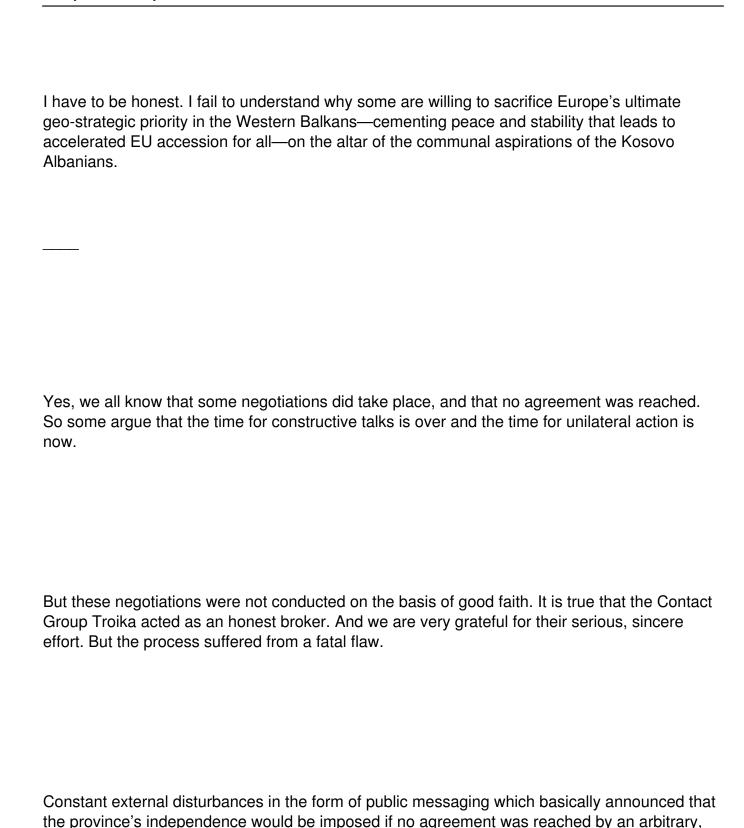
The forceful partition of Serbia would not result in, as some have suggested, a Balkan version of the Velvet Divorce. It would rather be like cutting off the hand of Peter to feed Paul, as the expression goes.

Moreover, forcibly partitioning Serbia would fundamentally overturn a core tenet of the international system established in 1945, strengthened in Europe by the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, and reaffirmed countless times since the end of the Cold War.

The precedent that would be created would give great hope to secessionists everywhere, from the Basques in Spain and the Taiwanese in China, to the Kurds in Iraq and the Luos and Kalenjin in Kenya, to say nothing of the strong pressures that would be felt for a bloody re-drawing of borders throughout the Western Balkans.

Such a myopic vision of the way forward—such a tendency to view Kosovo's future status primarily through the lens of political expediency—is truly disappointing.

by H.



pre-set deadline.

In effect, the Kosovo Albanians were told that they would get everything they wanted if they <i>did n't</i> compromise—hardly the sort of inducement that could lead to a negotiated settlement, wouldn't you say?
Opportunities for negotiations are not exhausted. Because if we say they are, then it means that everyone has decided to just sit back and wait for the disaster to strike.
Ladies and Gentlemen,
The time is now for all the stakeholders involved in the future of the Western Balkans to constructively make use of the weeks and months to come—and to do so in the spirit of cooperation and partnership, informed by the values and aims that we share.

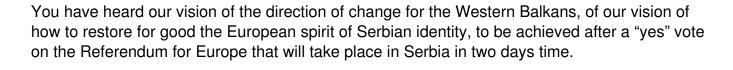
Let's re-double our efforts.

Here is what I propose: that, for the first time since the future status process began, a symmetrical set of incentives for both sides to reach a negotiated, mutually-acceptable agreement, be put on the table.

It's not that we are asking for more of the same, for more time. What we're asking for is quality t ime. So that no one from Pristina feels confident to say, as was done during the final round of the talks, that the Kosovo Albanians do not want to negotiate status. We have to work together to find a way to change the psychological mindset—ever-present amongst the Kosovo Albanians—that says "what's mine is mine, what's yours is negotiable."

To facilitate an agreement, Serbia is prepared to narrow the traditional definition of sovereignty. We are willing to ensure that Kosovo has the broadest possible autonomy one can imagine, while remaining with Serbia under a common sovereign roof. We have no interest in ruling over the Kosovo Albanian community: we do not want to tax them, nor to police them, nor to have their judicial or their educational systems re-integrated into ours. Our currency does not have to have a presence in Kosovo. Our military would not have to be there, either. And we would not interfere with their relationship with international financial institutions; with them having separate representation in international sporting federations; or even with them having some sort of representation abroad.

Can you think of another country that would be willing to go that far? And still Pristina refuses to relax its maximalist demand for independence in defiance of the Security Council, and in defiance of international law. Is it reasonable to reward this uncompromising position? Only a solution that is acceptable to both sides can be viable, sustainable, and lasting. And that means that the way forward lies in embracing European principles such as compromise, concession, and consensus-building, by engaging in a process of deliberate, patient, and sustained, good-faith negotiations until a compromise is struck. For it is never too late to negotiate about the future—especially when it's a future we all share. Giving up is not the European way, history's whisper reminds us. Ladies and Gentlemen,



By remembering the future—in the words of the *Svatopluk*—as we consolidate the promise of Europe in the Balkans, we believe we can avoid stepping into the Kosovo independence chasm before us all.

We believe we can achieve an equitable peace, a compromise solution.

We believe this is possible because we believe in Europe, and because we believe in fulfilling the democratic potential of our country.

We honor its past and have faith in its future. And we reject the views of those of little faith who, by their pessimism about a common European identity, diminish Serbia's present, betray our past, and deny us our future.

Thank you very much.