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Excellencies,

Dear Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to be the first ever Foreign Minister of the Republic of Serbia to visit this great, European country.

I want to share with you my impression that Spain is one of Europe's greatest success stories of the final quarter of the 20th century.

What you have accomplished in the last several decades is truly extraordinary. I sincerely salute your achievements. Encouraged by your example and aided by your experience, Serbia can leap into her European future. too

And therefore, I want to frame my remarks to you this afternoon within a vision of such a future, taking account of the challenges we face in consolidating the European idea of democracy, the institutions that flow from it, the cooperation they entail, and the values that are at its foundation.

Let me be absolutely clear at the outset: rapid EU accession is the Government of Serbia's fundamental priority.

The EU is a remarkable accomplishment, one of humankind's grandest political ideas ever put into practice. The accession process *itself*—in Serbia's case, even the *pre*-accession process—can transform and enrich a society without robbing it of its distinct identity.

I speak of a Europe free of division and strife, a Europe where reconciliation is a force for good change. Because even while it looks forward, we cannot flourish without a full and open account of the past. That is why the Government of Serbia is fully cooperating with the ICTY, and why the few indictees still at-large must be located, they all must be arrested, and they all must be handed over to the Hague. That is going to continue being a priority of this Government.

With that in mind, allow me to refer to the visionary words spoken by your Sovereign less than a month before your country’s formal accession to the European Community, as it was then called.

Addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg, King Juan Carlos spoke of the *choice*—the *free* choice—that Europe had made to seek a “unity founded on the *entendimiento profundo* between its peoples.” He spoke of the choice that Europe had made to seek “unity as an expression of the will to live in common, in peace and in liberty, and not simply as an agreement between governments.” And he spoke of unity “animated by a desire to maintain Europe as a guardian of liberty, democracy and human rights.”

His words continue to shine in the glory of a noble truth that stands the test of time, experience, and dedication, and they continue to frame the vision of a strong, united and democratic Spain in a strong, united and democratic Europe.

The spirit in which these words were spoken frame my vision of Serbia, and the rest of the Western Balkans, fully integrated into the European Union.

Together, we can rededicate the meaning of His Majesty’s words. For I believe that the soft power of a united Europe confident in the way forward, certain of its place in the world, and secure in the truth of its ideas, stands as the guardian of a vision that will soon become—for the first time in its long history—a reality: a Europe that is truly whole, permanently free, and forever at peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We each strive to put into practice on a daily basis, our belief in the interdependence of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, and human and minority rights.

By embracing the grand idea of Europe, we embrace a heritage of invaluable books, documents, charters, and treaties that give shape to the civic, political, social and economic rights and obligations of both citizens and their states.

We embrace the cornerstone belief that these rights and obligations are indivisible, that they

form parts of the same whole—and we embrace them as the only way to a more progressive, more tolerant, humane, transparent and inclusive Europe.

A democracy of substance, then, is at the heart of the grand idea of Europe. Democracy is, to paraphrase Cervantes, a government of flesh and bone, a government walking shoulder to shoulder with each and every citizen with empathy and understanding, and a government that shares in their hopes and dreams, as Prime Minister Zapatero has put it.

Democracy is about equality, openness, pluralism and prosperity. Democracy is the only form of government in which human beings have a chance to justly live a purposeful, noble life.

And democracy is the only form of government in which the future is not a gift to be received, but an achievement to be made.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The task before Europe—its strategic duty—is to develop a concerted effort to articulate and pursue a comprehensive strategy—a strategy for a responsible international role in an interdependent but volatile world.

Europe needs to continue identifying itself with the quest for universal human dignity—something that the grand idea of Europe embodies—but something that also implies respect for the diversity of human traditions and values, and recognition that persisting injustices in the human condition must be remedied, all the while standing firm against the various threats of our way of life, such as terrorism.

There are no precedents for a comprehensive strategy thusly articulated, for Europe itself is an unprecedented adventure toward the achievement of the common good. The words of a Spanish poet Henry Kissinger likes to quote—Antonio Machado—rises to my mind. “Traveller”, it begins, “there are no roads. Roads are made by walking.”

There is a walk that we must begin together, and I want—in the final portion of my remarks to you this afternoon—to point towards the direction in which this unprecedented walk we must begin, ought to take place.

That walk along the road we must create together is the process by which we will determine the future status of Serbia’s southern province of Kosovo and Metohija, under United Nations administration since June 1999.

We can be comforted, however, by the knowledge that the ultimate destination is known in advance. That destination is the same for Kosovo as for the rest of Serbia—and all the Western Balkans. That destination is Europe, that is, full membership in the European Union.

The question before us, therefore, is how to achieve a solution to Kosovo’s future status that promotes the consolidation of the democratic values and institutions I spoke of. A solution that promotes the economic transformation of the Western Balkans and the security architecture of all of Europe. And a solution that respects both the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia and the legitimate right of the Albanians in Kosovo to self-governance.

In Spain, I need not elaborate on the danger of proposed maximalist solutions to nationalist conflicts, of solutions that hint at violence if they are not accepted in their entirety, of solutions whose primary hypothetical beneficiaries see no need for dialogue, concession and reconciliation.

Rather, I need only point to the constitutional value you place on plurality—on your efforts to

integrate diversity within an overall unity. And I need only mention one of your Constitution’s original purposes, namely ensuring peaceful coexistence and freedom. For you know very well that freedom for your Autonomous Communities and Cities is not the same as independence.

Yet the independence of Kosovo is precisely what some in the international community want to impose on Serbia, forgetting, it seems, that this would be nothing short of forcing the partition of our country upon us—an indecent proposal, to say the least, in the Europe of the twenty-first century.

The only way forward is to work patiently with you and the rest of the European Union—together with other stakeholders in the international system—and find a solution to Kosovo’s future status acceptable to all of us.

We need to combine our resources and experiences to achieve a creative, mutually acceptable, compromise solution to the future status of Kosovo.

Such a solution ought to be based on a number of mutually-reinforcing, European precepts.

One, the consolidation of democracy in Serbia. As the pivot country in the region, we can assume the role of regional accession accelerator, but only if our democratic transition does not suffer a potentially fatal blow accrued through the imposition of Kosovo's independence.

Two, the acceleration of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans.

Three, maintaining the inviolability of internationally-recognized borders and the respect of the sovereign equality of states, as guaranteed by the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. Their violation would create an awful precedent. A panoply of ethnic and sectarian problems would be opened. Throughout the world, existing conflicts could escalate, frozen conflicts could reignite, and new ones could be instigated.

Four, the right to self-governance of the province's Albanians. Internationally-guaranteed institutions ought to be established that provide for the administration of Pristina's domestic affairs unimpeded by Belgrade.

Five, the international guarantee of human and minority rights for all residents of Kosovo. Conditions must be created for the sustainable return of the more than 200,000 mainly Kosovo Serb IDPs to the province.

Six, comprehensive efforts at reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians. The way forward lies in helping us confront the legacy of the 1990s, for the demonization and caricature of the other side is no way forward. The time has come to tear down the exclusivist mythologies of the past.

Seven, the international guarantee to safeguard the priceless cultural and religious heritage of the province, some of which has been placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

And eight—although in truth it underpins the previous seven—the unconditional commitment to forging a lasting, secure peace. This means an absolute commitment from *all* sides to the peaceful resolution of this issue. Peace must be committed to, before it can be made.

These and other precepts ought to form the basis for choosing the road not taken—the road of compromise and dialogue, respect and pluralism, tolerance and transparency. They point to the urgent need for new negotiations, negotiations that will have no threat of unilateralism; no

unnecessary delays; no pre-determined outcome; and result in no clear winners and losers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Everything I have just said about how to go about finding a solution to the future status of Kosovo—about the journey to be undertaken along a road we will make together, by walking side by side by side—flows from the inexorable logic of Europe and the promise of its grand idea.

For I say to you that Serbia wants to be a part of a *European* solution, not a part of a *Balkan* problem.

I want to reassure you that, in searching for such a solution, Belgrade will spare no effort. Hear me when I say that the new Serbian government is one that backs up its words with corresponding deeds. We are ready to start talks tomorrow, for no one should underestimate our capacity and readiness to reach a historic,

compromise
solution.

I would like to close with the words of Averroes, a late 12th century native of Cordoba and one of the greatest thinkers Iberia has ever produced. “True fullness is acquired only through the thing that has the noblest existence, namely that which participates most in truth.”

Another word for fullness is inclusiveness, a third is abundance. Europe is an inclusive abundance of the noblest of riches.

It is only within such a framework—the framework of Europe—that we can hope to succeed.

Patience; boldness; deliberation. And truth, the thing that has the noblest existence. These are the virtues we need to call up and make use of, as we work together to achieve the promise of

peace and prosperity that Europe delivers.

Opportunities will come. And they will multiply as they are seized. And as they multiply, they will fulfill their promise, they will have the noblest existence. That is the fullness of Averroes, that is what we owe to ourselves, and to our children.