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Excellencies,

Dear Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking Professor Stefen Kipf and Dr. Gernot Erler for their kind words of introduction, and for their organization of this event.

Foreigners frequently begin conversations about Berlin with a reference to this city’s singular role in the Cold War. This is understandable. People from all parts of the world feel they can identify in a personal way with what took place here during the decades of division. It’s as if what happened in Berlin directly flowed into the universal current of history, touching us all, and thereby contributing somehow to our collective consciousness. That is why pictures of the Berlin Wall being torn down by ordinary Germans often flash before our eyes when this city’s name is invoked.

But I want to begin somewhere else. I want to turn for a moment to 1878 and to the unique significance that year holds—both for the history of Serbia, and for the history of bilateral relations between our two countries.

On July 13th of that year, the Treaty of Berlin formally recognized the Principality of Serbia as the world’s 28th fully sovereign state.

This would not have been possible without the statesmanship of Germany’s first Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. Recognizing no direct advantage for Germany from events in the Balkans,

and thus finding it useful to balance the interests of others in the region, Bismarck worked towards forging an agreement that greatly benefited Serbia.

Seeking to further the interests of his country in an increasingly self-interested, zero-sum international environment, Bismarck was tactically flexible in seeking to fulfill his overall strategic objective. His often misunderstood exclamation that the Balkans “were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier” is a case in point. Bismarck was not speaking disdainfully, but pragmatically. He meant that it was not in the German interest to go to war over the Balkans, but rather to strengthen the European peace—and this meant supporting Serbia.

My country took full advantage of the opportunity. Our delegation was led by one of my predecessors as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jovan Ristic—one of Serbia’s most distinguished statesmen. A devoted student of Leopold von Ranke, the most influential historian of the 19th century and a former professor at this institution, Ristic worked with Bismarck to ensure that Serbia became an integral part of the constellation of European sovereign states.

In short, it was in Berlin that Serbia comprehensively reasserted its rightful place in the European family of nations—in large part thanks to the combined efforts of two notable alumni of this great university: Otto von Bismarck and Jovan Ristic.

So it is with great pleasure that I stand here before you, the first Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs to address Berlin’s Humboldt University.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The founder of this great institution, Wilhelm von Humboldt, often wrote about how education could bring our common human nature to the surface. He reflected on the combination of an individual’s natural attachment to what is “strictly his own” together with a curiosity, a “longing”—to use his words—“about the unknown but which is in common.” He wrote of the “bond of humanity deeply rooted in the innermost nature of man”, and ascribed to us all a quality that ensured we were “spared from an exclusive attachment to the present.”

This essential duality of man between the particular and the universal has achieved a sort of synthesis-in-the-making in our time, and in our lands. It is the European Union—a new political form defined as more than an alliance, and less than a country, that looks beyond its present towards a common future. It is a grand project worthy of the legacy bequeathed to us by its founders—such as Robert Schuman, another alumnus of Humboldt University—who had every expectation that the nations of the Old Continent would build it up into something truly worthy of their vision of the fraternity of Europe.

In my view, what has become the European Union is the result of two equally important

realizations.

The first centers on the growing awareness that unless the countries of Europe learn to speak with one voice on the international stage of the 21st century, each would gradually slide towards inconsequence in a world that is at once becoming more inter-dependent and less coherent. In the European context, this has meant the rejection of hegemonic ambitions of individual states, in favor of a binding commitment to overcome challenges and disagreements by democratic means, rooted in law and custom, on the basis of a communitarian approach to a common future.

The second revolves around a tradition of shared values, rooted in a common philosophical fountainhead, developed over more than two millennia. These European values have come to include representative democracy, individual rights, juridical due process and the rule of law, minority protection, social justice, a free press, religious freedom, marketplace competition—and, after having too many wars fought on the bloodied soil of the continent, an overwhelming emphasis on soft power in conflict resolution.

In my view, the political consequences of these two realizations are what make the noble construct that is the European Union more than the mere sum of its sovereign parts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Never in the history of our country have we had a more pro-European administration than that of President Boris Tadic. Never have we been more dedicated. And never have we been more able to commence the sprint to the finish line of Europe.

Rapid EU accession is the central strategic priority of the Republic of Serbia.

We have fully embraced the values of Europe. We believe they constitute the intangible greatness of the Union we seek to join. They form the foundation of our democracy, and our efforts at reconciliation.

But also—and perhaps most importantly—they provide us cause to build on the dignity of our past, while giving voice to our belief in what we can accomplish in the future.

And what is of great significance is that my country’s absolute dedication to join the EU is shared by all the countries of the Western Balkans. Europe, in other words, has become *the* unifying force of the region. Should the process of enlargement be successfully completed, I believe that the entire region can be propelled generationally forward. The Balkanization of the Balkans would not only be reversed, but buried once and for all.

Why then has this not happened? Why are we not closer? Why isn’t a sense of imminent belonging being felt throughout the region—and especially in Serbia? Why is there a creeping feeling that an opportunity is about to be missed—the best regional opportunity to come along in this generation to complete the European project in the Western Balkans?

My answer revolves around the distinct impression that prevails in our public that we are not being treated like other EU membership aspirants in the Western Balkans. We seem to be held to a different set of standards.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It seems like it is not just the Copenhagen Criteria—an objective standard of technical and

political achievement we are well on our way to fulfilling ahead of schedule.

It is also the way the ICTY issue has been handled. Reconciliation is a cornerstone value of Europe, so it is natural that full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has become an additional requirement for all the countries of the Western Balkans on the road to membership.

Just so we are absolutely clear: the Republic of Serbia has demonstrated time and again its fundamental commitment to the EU accession process by fully cooperating with the ICTY. And we will continue to do so. There is no doubt about that.

Unfortunately, some see this as not enough. Only in the case of Serbia has the definition of “full cooperation” become harsher over time. We have come to notice that the goalposts kept shifting. The conditionality has increased, and full cooperation with the Tribunal has been redefined: total compliance has come to mean delivering Mladic—even though it is evident to just about everyone that Serbia is doing everything it can to deliver him to the Hague.

Let me illustrate the situation in which we find ourselves with this anecdote: A few days after the current Serbian government was confirmed by Parliament, an operation was undertaken to arrest and hand-over Radovan Karadzic—we acted swiftly on intelligence we had just gotten. The reaction of one of my European colleagues less than 24 hours after this took place was deeply disappointing. He said to me: “Serbia had captured the wrong man.”

This has resulted in the truly ironic situation that the most pro-European government in the history of Serbia has effectively begun to deliver on most of its electoral promises, save the most important one: moving forward on EU integration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It does not end there. Sometimes we’re told of the reflections in certain corners that Serbia’s progress on EU accession ought to be linked to the issue of Kosovo.

This is not helpful, to say the least. For although we may profoundly disagree with some of our European friends on UDI, we believe that a diplomatic position of one or more EU member States must never be transformed into a political condition for Serbia’s European accession to go forward. Bilateral relationships have been burdened by decisions to recognize the forcible secession of a part of our country, it is true. But no such burden exists in the case of the European Union, which has taken a principled position of status neutrality—one confirmed by this past Wednesday’s Security Council session on the deployment of EULEX to our southern province.

This is the right policy, and it must be maintained.

Let me be very clear on this point: any attempt to connect UDI recognition to an EU membership perspective would result in what I trust none of us want—the instantaneous halt to Serbia’s accession process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A strategic opportunity is before us. Favorable opinion for the EU in Serbia is today at an all-time high. But if we don’t move forward, then I am afraid that we could look back to the end of 2008 as the peak of Euro-enthusiasm in Serbia. We must start passing through clearly marked signposts along the road to Brussels—and we must do so rapidly. This is a strategic imperative. Otherwise, the prospect of a generation to consolidate the gains already made in the Western Balkans could fall to the wayside.

What is needed, therefore, is a roadmap for accession success.

Let 2009 become Serbia’s leap year, our year of European achievement. Let us work together to create that all-important sense of regional imminent belonging to the House of Europe.

Here is what I propose.

First, let us restore a common-sense understanding of what full cooperation with the ICTY really means, and un-freeze the Interim Agreement between Serbia and the European Union by the end of this year.

Second, let Serbia be put on the White Schengen List next year—for freedom of movement, the right to travel visa-free, is an embodiment of what Europe is to ordinary citizens of my country. And third, let 2009 be the year we commence the constructive management of Serbia’s application process, and achieve Official Candidacy Status.

One; two; three. Let’s just do these three things—together, as partners aiming at a common future. I repeat: Serbia will do its part if we are freed from out-of-date perceptions. I invite you to watch just how fast we can go.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I come to a now-famous speech before this very university by your then sitting Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer. On May 12th, 2000, he asked “*Quo vadis Europa?*” And he answered, “Onwards to the completion of European integration. A step backwards,” he added, “even just standing still in contentment with what has been achieved, would demand a fatal price of all EU member States and of all those that want to become members.” He concluded: “it would demand a fatal price above all of our people, for enlargement is a supreme national interest, especially for Germany.”

I am under no illusions that my remarks to you this afternoon will achieve the level of recognition that Joschka’s did.

That said, I would be satisfied if you took away just this one thing from my remarks to you today: Serbia is a proud democracy, absolutely dedicated to consolidating regional peace and stability—that views achieving membership in the European Union as being in our ‘supreme national interest.’

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I began my remarks to you this afternoon with Bismarck and 1878, and spoke of some of his accomplishments and limitations. I end with a brief consideration of what the Europe of the 21st century can truly become.

The EU whole, free and at peace—incorporating everything from the Baltics to the Balkans, Scandinavia to Iberia, the North Sea to the Black Sea—will turn out to be the magnificent answer to the until-now irrevocably unstable relationship between power and legitimacy in the long history of the Old Continent. Here is why:

We Europeans have learned over the course of many bloody centuries that unconstrained power failed to be a reliable guide to European order. Equally, we have discovered that

equilibrium yields best results if it predicated on common values.

In the past, the balance of power, in its zero-sum way, limited without preventing the *capacity* to overthrow the European order. Today and in the future, the unconditional embrace of shared values works to preclude even the

desire

to undermine, much less overthrow, the emerging 21

st

-century European order.

Hard power without legitimacy tempts tests of strength that lead to friction or conflict. The world of today is coming to the realization that legitimacy without power still tempts empty posturing, while inviting derision from the more fierce.

In my view, the European Union is poised to combine these various elements of statecraft into a sublime whole that is more than the sum of its parts—but only if all the parts are there to be combined in a prudent, statesmanlike way. Serbia is one such part—essential to the consolidation of success that will be the European project once completed. There it stands, right around the corner: the torch to illuminate the 21st-century’s international landscape—waiting to be seized for the supremely moral prize that it is, anticipating the political achievement that it can easily become, and longing to be the success that it was always destined to be.

That is the Europe and the Serbia we seek, we embrace, and we build: the prudent synthesis of a nation’s natural attachment to what is ‘strictly its own’, together with ‘longing for that which is unknown but held in common’—to paraphrase the immortal words of Wilhelm von Humboldt.

Thank you very much for the opportunity you have given me to share my vision of Serbia’s European time with you this afternoon.