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Mr. Secretary-General,

Dear Colleagues,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking our hosts, the Islamic Republic of Iran, for the excellent organization and warm hospitality we have all felt throughout the 15th Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran.

I come before you today representing a country that is an observer, yet also the largest successor to a co-founder of the Movement, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.

Our capital, Belgrade, was the Yugoslav capital, a city generations of NAM members recall with great fondness.

Our then president, Josip Broz Tito, was also the Movement's first Secretary-General. His impact on NAM, and his encouragement of its active, fundamental role in the preservation of world peace and promotion of multilateralism, will always be remembered.

As one of the founding fathers of the Movement, Tito worked hard to ease the ideological tensions created by the Cold War. Together with other statesmen, he tirelessly strove to promote greater respect for international law and the enhancement of cooperation among NAM member states. Tito's contribution to the development of a more just and inter-dependent world helped Yugoslavia and the rest of the Non-Aligned world to gain international respect and dignity, while giving a global, collective voice to the vast majority of the world's countries.

While the world has changed dramatically since the founding of the Movement, it is fair to say that the parameters of the contemporary international system, which continues to be rooted in the Charter of the United Nations, have been largely shaped by the dedicated work of generations of this Organization's visionaries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to say to you that despite the Republic of Serbia's determination to become a member of the European Union, the values we continue to embrace are the values of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As an observer-state, we strongly support the indispensable, just demands of this Organization for a more equitable global community dedicated to promote the democratization of international relations, development and human rights.

And in that spirit allow me to recall the words of President Tito, spoken at the First Non-Aligned Summit, held in Belgrade, in 1961: “The destiny of the world is not to be left to be decided solely by the Great Powers, [...] but also by the numerous other countries that collectively represent the majority of global public opinion. They represent the conscience of mankind, [...] and the humane and moral principles of our planet which, in the contemporary global framework, are assuming an ever-greater decision-making role. I think,” Tito concluded, “that we will do a great service to humanity if we clearly and decisively show the way that leads to the restoration of calm in the world, and to equitable and peace-loving cooperation amongst all the peoples of the earth.”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Fifth Paragraph of the draft Tehran Final Document states that the “Movement will *continue to uphold* the principles of sovereignty, the sovereign equality of States, [and] territorial integrity” and “defend, promote and encourage the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.”

The Fifteenth Paragraph reads, *inter alia*, that “UN Member States should renew their commitment to defend, preserve and promote the UN Charter and international law, with the aim of making further progress to achieving full respect for international law.”

Bearing the above in mind, I take this opportunity to inform you of the attempt at secession by Serbia's southern province of Kosovo that took place on February 17th.

The unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo's secessionists constitutes a blatant violation of the UN Charter and runs counter to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)'s *binding* obligation on all member-states to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country.

A great majority of both the UN's and the Movement's member states have continued to abide by these principles, and have not recognized this attempt at secession. On behalf of the Republic of Serbia, I want to express my profound appreciation to them for their strict commitment to the principles of international law.

Questioning the core precept of sovereignty anywhere in the world is a dangerous game fraught with precedent and political consequence. International legal order and global democratic governance are in danger of being undermined. As a result, we find ourselves facing a perilous impasse today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Consistent with our values, we have ruled out the use of force in solving this dispute, for we believe that peace and security can only be consolidated through dialogue, not imposition; through agreement, not compulsion; and through law, not unilateralism.

It is in that framework that I wish to inform you of Serbia's intent to submit a resolution to the United Nations General Assembly in September that asks of the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on whether Kosovo's attempt at secession is in accordance with international law.

In our view, many States would benefit from the legal guidance an ICJ advisory opinion would confer. It would enable them to make a more thorough judgment on the issue.

In addition, an ICJ advisory opinion, rendered in a non-contestable, non-adversarial manner, would go a long way towards calming tensions, avoiding further negative developments in the region and beyond, and facilitating efforts at reconciliation among all parties involved.

By having recourse to the ICJ, the General Assembly would ensure that the Kosovo issue becomes a symbol of renewed resolve towards the rule of law by the international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our forthcoming initiative is in full harmony with the Sixteenth Paragraph of the draft Tehran Final Document which states that the Movement “*invites* also the General Assembly [...] to request advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice on legal questions arising within the scope of their activities.”

On behalf of the Republic of Serbia, therefore, I solemnly ask for the support of each and every member of the Non-Aligned Movement. While my country is not at present a full member of NAM, I hope that the members will recognize the full consistency of Serbia’s position on the Kosovo issue with the principles of the Movement, and that you will rally to our cause as if we were still fully one of your own.

My friends, I have to admit that the occasion that brings us together is an emotional one for me and my country. We feel such an overwhelming sense of solidarity with the nations represented here today. Given the history of my country's role in the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement, it almost feels like visiting home again.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you in advance for your support, while expressing my profound hope that, with your help, a small country like mine will not be denied its right to ask a simple, elementary question. Think of the awful precedent that would be created should *any* country be denied this fundamental right.

And so I say in conclusion that together, we can strengthen the values that bind us to one another—and help consolidate the principles that have done so much to construct a more just and even-handed global society within the framework of the United Nations.

By supporting Serbia you strengthen our common dedication to equitable peace and cooperation, and you reaffirm the universal right to international justice for all.

Thank you for your attention.