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Madame Chairperson,

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank our Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis, for putting together this informal ministerial meeting in Corfu—an island of great significance for the Serbian people. It is to this place that our Government and armed forces came in January 1916 to rest, regroup, and, a year later, begin the journey to liberate our occupied lands. Many did not return, and lay buried in graveyards nearby. It is fitting that we remember their sacrifice, as we sit here—guardians of a process designed to ensure lasting peace, security and cooperation in Europe.

The OSCE represents a unique forum—at once pan-European and Trans-Atlantic—in which participating States can coordinate their positions in the context of the broader, *common* European security agenda. The OSCE can be at once a clearinghouse and a focal point for assessing the security dialogue taking place in other inter-state fora.

Regrettably, all this has been called into doubt of late. We are an Organization that is in the midst of a crisis of confidence. Over the past few years, we have been unable to raise the level of trust beyond its current sub-optimal level. Our founding principles are not being applied consistently, and the dedication to our common values has been questioned.

A flagrant example of this is Kosovo. The unilateral declaration of independence by the ethnic-Albanian authorities of our southern province amounts to an attempt to forcibly partition Serbia. UDI constitutes a direct challenge to our sovereignty and territorial integrity—in defiance of the Serbian constitution and the UN Charter, against the will of the Security Council, and in clear violation of the Helsinki Final Act.

We were disappointed that no unified stand was taken against this infringement of basic international principles. It opened a door for the territorial integrity of others to be brought into question.

The divisions that arose as a result of UDI are symptomatic of a broader, more general issue.

We must avoid a situation in which critics can say that double standards exist in the OSCE space—one for Kosovo, and a different one for other situations. Exceptions can be agreed only by consensus—and there is no such consensus in the case of Kosovo.

Serbia is not going to allow for this problem to be swept under the rug.

Our immediate contribution to addressing this challenge to the very foundations of our common efforts has been to respond to UDI in a way consistent with the core of Helsinki. We did not react unilaterally, nor did we seek confrontation. We ruled out the use of force and the imposition of economic sanctions.

Excellencies,

Today is Vidovdan—a day of profound importance for my country. It is a testament of our resilience as a people, and of our deep attachment to Kosovo. It is not a mere historical marker, but also the link that binds the living tradition of Serbia to itself today.

As in times past, Vidovdan in this century continues to be the symbol of the defense of our identity as a nation. Today, we choose—without hesitation—to defend it peacefully, through law and diplomacy.

But just as we were unyielding then, we remain unyielding now, and we shall remain

unyielding forever. Come what may, Serbia will never recognize Pristina's unilateral declaration of independence.

Our destiny lies in proudly sharing our legacy with others. So on Vidovdan 2009, we confidently reaffirm our belief in peace and a common future for all the nations of Europe—a safe and secure future in the European Union.

Excellencies,

Recent events in the OSCE space have made it clear that it is time to engage each other in a frank and open dialogue about inclusive ways to bolster security in the 21st century. I believe it is our duty to forge ahead with ideas and proposals designed to strengthen the consistent implementation of the basic principles of our Organization. Confidence must be restored, and trust rebuilt.

All constructive initiatives which aim to bring us closer to such an achievement are laudable, and should be encouraged. We acknowledge, in particular, the commendable efforts of Presidents Medvedev and Sarkozy to take the lead in proposing concrete steps in the direction

of improving European security within the framework of the OSCE.

Serbia also welcomes the commencement of the Corfu Process. We have not yet agreed on the precise modalities of dialogue. I therefore propose something that worked well in the past, during a critical moment when much was in doubt.

My country played a crucial role in advancing what began at Helsinki more than thirty years ago, by bridging often intractable positions before and during the First CSCE Follow-up Meeting that took place in Belgrade. The Corfu Process could emulate aspects of this model of “structured informality,” as it was put then. Each participating State must be treated equally in the debate to come.

A political commitment here today to such a way forward may hopefully produce the adoption of concrete proposals and action plans by the December Athens Ministerial. Under such circumstances, the 2010 Kazakh chairmanship would be well-positioned to move the process further along, paving the way for an OSCE Heads of State Summit.

Excellencies,

I have already gone past my allotted time, so I leave you with this concluding thought. Sooner or later, we might have to consider some sort of control and implementation mechanisms, something that binds us to respect what has been achieved through consensus. I say this because a danger does exist for this Organization to become a sort of diplomatic talk shop. The Corfu Process could pre-empt such a regretful development. Serbia therefore welcomes this initiative and looks forward to actively participate.

Thank you very much.