

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

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STATEMENT

by

H.E. MR. VUK DRAŠKOVIĆ, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me at the outset to convey the greetings and best wishes of the people of my country to you, your peoples and to the Secretary-General.

War, oppression, crime, hatred and suffering plague hundreds of millions of men and women all over the world today. In the pursuit of the ideals of peace, democracy and happiness, the United Nations is the united conscience of humankind. In order to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration, our Organization must be strengthened structurally, economically and spiritually.

Serbia and Montenegro therefore supports the initiatives both for the enlargement of the Security Council according to the criterion of equal representation of all continents and for the special role of the most developed countries without whose support the United Nations would not be able to fulfill its noble goals.

Mr. President,

The fight against global terrorism and all forms of this scourge, such as anti-Semitism, is our primary responsibility today.

Those who perpetrated, masterminded and bankrolled terrorist atrocities in New York, Washington, Moscow, Beslan, Jerusalem, Madrid, Istanbul and other places have not only declared war against all nations, but also against God Himself, Who Is the same God for all people.

In the fight against terrorism force is unavoidable, but prevention is what we need most. Politicians, religious leaders, members of international spiritual elites and the media must continually emphasize that the killing of children and of the innocent are in fact crimes that the terrorists are perpetrating against their own religions and against their own nations and that God will neither forgive them or reward them with paradise. Multilateralism is the means to prevent the catastrophe of the clash of faiths and civilizations. At the same time, terrorism must be condemned with equal resolve by all. There can be no "acceptable" terrorists, nor should terrorists be proclaimed as "freedom fighters" anywhere.

Mr. President,

Serbia and Montenegro is a small country which has been confronted with most of the current problems and misfortunes of this world. The consequences of the recent wars in which Yugoslavia, one of the founding members of the United Nations, was dismembered, are immense and painful. Unemployment, poverty, the tragic plight of about 600 000 refugees, the hopelessness of the young which breeds drug dependence, a rising suicide rate, the desperate position of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija...

The reality of Kosovo and Metohija today is both dramatic and grim. Over the last five years of the international administration and dominance of the Albanian majority of this Serbian province has led to the killing or abduction of more than 2 500 Serbs, the destruction of 150 centuries-old churches and monasteries and about 40 000 homes. As a consequence of terrorism and massive violations of basic human rights, almost 200 000 Serbs and other non-Albanians have been expelled from Kosovo and Metohija.

The hopes of suffering victims are directed at the United Nations, its bodies and agencies. I take this opportunity to express my most profound gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the UNESCO Director-General for the decision to convene in November an international donors' conference for the reconstruction of destroyed churches and monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija. We are also grateful for the principled position that all homes must be rebuilt, that conditions must be created for the return of all of those expelled and that the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija must be guaranteed the rights to life, freedom of movement and all civil, national and religious liberties.

Mr. President,

The spirit of a united Europe and of a world united, lives in the hearts of Serbs and Montenegrins. While we respect the state borders that we share with our neighbours, we wish to erase them in practical life and to build a common European future based on dialogue, reconciliation and the equality of all nations, cultures and faiths. We are fully confident of attaining this goal with the strong support of the United Nations.

Insistence by some on the creation of a sovereign State of Kosovo amounts to a call for the break up of the sovereign State of Serbia and Montenegro. Such an aspiration breeds new hatreds and miseries and is contrary to the basic tenets of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We are ready to work on an agreement on the status of Kosovo and Metohija. However, we will not agree to the violation of our state and its rights.

Mr. President,

By applying consistent standards in addressing all crimes, the United Nations will also assist the efforts of democratic Government in Serbia and Montenegro to fulfill our obligations to the ICTY. We must do this. The nation is innocent, responsibility rests on the individual and none of the indicted for war crimes has a right to hold a nation hostage.

All of us on this planet are brothers and sisters. *Gens una sumus*, we are one family. Therefore, the primary obligation of any majority - religious, racial or ethnic - is to fully protect the rights of minorities. I assure you that my Government is unreservedly committed to this principle.

Thank you, Mr. President.