



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

**STATEMENT
BY
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United Nations General Assembly
Sixty Second Session
General Debate

New York, 27th of September 2007

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me, Mr President, to congratulate you on your election as President of the 62nd Session of the UN Assembly and wish you successes in this important job.

I would like to thank the outgoing president, Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, for her valuable contribution to the General Assembly.

I would also like to congratulate the General Secretary, Mr. Ban-ki Moon, for his great efforts in support of peace and cooperation in the world and his contribution for consolidating the UN and its institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a representative of a country that suffered one of the most totalitarian post Second World War dictatorships, it is my deep conviction that freedom and its values, its defense and promotion, and support for oppressed people to free themselves from tyranic regimes that continue to

generate human suffering, poverty, violence and terrorism, should be the main priority of this organization.

In this context, I would like to state that Central Asia, Middle East, the Balkans and the entire world are now more free and safer without the likes of Mullah Omar, Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic.

Taking from this opportunity, I would like to greet the message of hope that President George W. Bush sent from this tribune to all the peoples of the world still living under tyrannical regimes.

Mr. President,

Albania is a small country, but with a clear vocation and determination to strengthen freedom and democracy for its citizens, and deeply committed to give its modest contribution for peace and security in the world.

We have established a close cooperation with friendly countries and international organizations in the fight against terrorism. In this regard, our peacekeeping units have served or are serving in Bosnia, Georgia, Afghanistan and Iraq. I am delighted to inform you that in this spirit my Government has decided to contribute another platoon to the UN peacekeeping operations.

Albania has also been a staunch supporter of the international efforts to limit the proliferation of arms of mass destruction and the unlawful use of small arms and light weapons which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability. In this context, amongst other measures, we committed to the destruction of our stockpile of chemical weapons and on July 2007 Albania became the first country in the world free of any kind of chemical materials and armaments. I take this opportunity to thank the governments of the USA, Germany, Italy, Greece and Switzerland which provided valuable financial and technical assistance to achieve this important objective.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are successfully implementing a number of important programs in cooperation with the UNDP, UNICEF and other UN agencies.

Albania has already become part of the enterprise for UN reform, by voluntarily joining the One UN Program, as one of the pilot countries. We are presently working with UN agencies in order to test the One UN concept, and to develop new approaches and ways of partnership in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and environment.

The first results of this project are very encouraging and we are fully committed to make every effort for this initiative to become a success story.

European integration and NATO membership are two main objectives for Albania. We are committed to undertake any reform and make every step to achieve these goals. A year ago we signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU and are seriously working in every direction to fulfil its standards and obligations.

At the same, we have undertaken thorough reforms of our armed forces, assisted by many of the NATO member countries, alongside our efforts for strengthening the rule of law and democracy in the country. But we are hopeful that by the time of the next NATO Summit in Bucharest we would be ready to deserve the invitation to join the Alliance.

Mr. President,

It was not long ago when the Balkans was the stage of human tragedies, brutal wars and ethnic cleansing, based on the concept of the greater country and fueled by the extreme nationalism and racism of a nation, which was absorbed by the idea of its own hegemony over the others. But in a few years, the Balkan countries managed to transit from the age of dictatorships, hatred and conflicts into the age of peace, cooperation, friendship and integration.

I take this opportunity to gratefully thank all the governments and taxpayers of the member countries of NATO, EU and UN, as well as these organizations, whose support and assistance was so important in bringing about this historical change.

However, I do believe that the final solution of the Kosova status in full respect of the expressed will of her citizens for independence, is a fundamental condition for a durable peace and stability, not only in Kosova, but in the entire region as well. Albania fully supports President's Ahtisaari project, and the efforts by Troika for the solution of the final status.

Due to the lack of realism and the ghost of greater Serbia, Belgrade turned down President's Ahtisaari's project, which sets forth and guarantees the highest European standards for the Serb minorities in Kosova, which in

truth are much more advanced than those enjoyed by the Albanians living in South Serbia.

Rejection of the Ahtisaari's package is unhelpful and proves that what matters first for Belgrade is not the freedoms and rights of Serbs in Kosova, but rather the idea of the Greater Serbia. Such a stance by Belgrade has been encouraged by the Russian position in the Security Council towards Ahtisaari's project, a position that, despite of its motivation, does not contribute to the peace and stability of the region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Claims that Kosova's independence sets an international precedent, or lays conditions for the creation of the Greater Albania, as well as the fear from having two Albanian states, in the Balkans are unfounded. Those who are interested in the truth and reality can easily realize that Kosova is a unique case, both from the historical and current perspective.

For more than five centuries, from the end of 1300s until early 1900s, Kosova was a part of the Ottoman Empire, inhabited in majority by native Albanians with their roots and shelter there. Only at the beginning of the last century, in one of the greatest historic injustices, Kosova was separated

from the Albanian territory and given tribute to Serbia, for the sole reason that it was part of an empire that lost the war.

Kosova is also a unique case in her sufferings. During the past century, the implementation of the Cubrilovic doctrine of extreme racism and extermination against Albanians turned Kosova into an arena of ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

It is also a unique case because the last Serbian genocide against Albanians in 1999, which caused thousands of atrocities among innocent population, massive graves and the destruction and burning of more than 130 thousand homes, schools and hospitals, obliged NATO to undertake its greatest offensive to protect human rights and freedom.

Kosova is also a unique case due to the fact that during Josip Broz Tito's regime, it was an constitutional entity of the Yugoslav Federation, enjoying its veto rights in the federal government. During this time Kosova chaired for several terms the Yugoslav Federation, based on the leadership rotation principle within Yugoslavia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The claim that the independence of Kosova may lead to the creation of Greater Albania cannot be farther from the truth. In reality, Kosova's independence will only end the fluidity of Albanians in the Balkans, along

with the idea of the creation of a single Albanian state in the territories where they are a dominant majority. The simple truth is that Kosova Albanians have decided in their project of the future to join Brussels, not Tirana.

On the other hand, I would like to guarantee that Albania remains determined to fully respect the international borders of its neighbors, including those of Kosova. Albania is closely collaborating and will continue to cooperate bilaterally with all countries in the region, including Serbia, in the process of regional, European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

I believe that the concern about two independent Albanian states in the Balkans is xenophobic. Two democratic states inhabited in majority by Albanians will be two more friendly countries to their neighbors.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to urge the political leadership of Kosova to refrain from taking unilateral actions. They should continue, as they have done so far, to cooperate with the Group of Contact and the international community for the solution of the final status of Kosova, in full respect of their will and the dignity they deserve.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the political leadership of Kosova for submitting treaty of reconciliation, friendship and cooperation with Serbia - a treaty inspired by the highest European values. I hope and wish that Serbia would take up this important opportunity, because I believe that peace and coexistence between Albanians and Serbs in the Balkans is in the best benefit of our nations and the entire region.