



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to the Foreign Minister of Serbia and Montenegro Vuk Draskovic

As delivered by Charge d'Affaires Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 18, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a great pleasure to welcome the Foreign Minister of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, Mr. Vuk Draskovic, to the Permanent Council this morning. We appreciate hearing his perspective on Kosovo, borders, the region, the wider European context, and we thank him for his supportive words on the global war on terrorism.

Although we would disagree with some of his characterizations of Kosovo and its recent history, we do share the Minister's views on the importance of the right of return and the need for multi-ethnic democratic societies throughout Southeast Europe. We were also pleased by his positive words in regard to the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro.

The United States continues to support the excellent work of that Mission, under the leadership of Ambassador Massari, whom we are also pleased to see here today, and we commend the authorities of Serbia and Montenegro for maintaining a positive, constructive relationship with the Mission.

We also share the view that European integration represents the future for Serbia and Montenegro. Some steps along the path to integration have already been taken, but more needs to be done to solidify and augment the progress made so far toward democratic reform.

We are pleased that all three branches of the state union government are now functioning, following the constitution of the Court of Serbia and Montenegro on the 5th of May. This is a crucial step forward for the state union that should aid in the harmonization of Serbia and Montenegro's laws and regulations. We welcome the appointment of the eighth and final judge, so that the Court can begin to work on the backlog of cases that has built up over the past year.

At the republic level there has also been progress on democratic reforms; this includes bringing legislation on ethnic minorities in line with international standards, developing comprehensive strategies to fight organized crime and trafficking, and adopting election reforms as recommended by ODIHR. We look forward to the second round of Serbian Presidential elections on June 27 and we hope to see a continuation of reforms started in 2000.

One condition that, of course, must be met before European integration can become a reality is for Serbia and Montenegro to fulfill its obligation to cooperate fully with the United Nations' International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. In that regard, the United States supports Serbia and Montenegro's decision to reconstitute the National Council for Cooperation. We also urge Serbia and Montenegro to apprehend and transfer Radko Mladic and all other fugitive indictees to The Hague.

With regard to Kosovo, let me just say the tragic events earlier this year only solidified our belief that there is an urgent need for constructive dialogue and reconciliation, and we were pleased to hear the Minister's supportive comments on the need for dialogue as well. We have consistently urged all of Kosovo's citizens to engage in the creation of a multi-ethnic, democratic society based on tolerance and respect. The United States continues to support dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and urges both sides to participate in all aspects of this dialogue.

In additions, we hope Belgrade will encourage Kosovo's Serbs to participate actively in all of Kosovo's institutions, particularly the Kosovo Assembly, the working group on decentralization, and a Kosovo Security Advisory Group.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, please allow me, through you, to thank Minister Draskovic for his appearance today and to offer our appreciation for the excellent cooperation we have with the delegation of Serbia and Montenegro here in Vienna. We look forward to continuing this productive relationship as we work together to support the OSCE mandate in Serbia and Montenegro and to achieve together our mutual goal of a stable, democratic Southeastern Europe.

I thank you.