



SERBIA

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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STATEMENT

by

H.E. MR. BORIS TADIĆ
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations is the only universal institution that unites us as a global community of independent states. At the very heart of this indispensable Organization stands the General Assembly—the only place in the world where the sovereign voices of all countries are given an equal, legitimate say in the future course of mankind.

Safeguarding the UN Charter's principles remains much more important than the policies of any single nation, especially in transformative periods, such as this one. For the international system seems to be undergoing a paradigm shift—in many ways comparable in scope to 1945 and 1989.

No one is yet able to reliably predict how deep the change will turn out to be. What is becoming evident is that interrelated factors—the latest one being the global economic crisis—have expedited the arrival of a new set of circumstances onto the world stage. A broad repositioning appears to be taking place. The global balance of power is shifting, as new financial models compete for primacy. All in all, international relations are becoming less predictable to forecast.

Achieving consensus on fundamental issues that affect us all has never been more important. As UN member States, it is incumbent upon us to work more closely together to reaffirm the rules that govern the international system; to reinforce the territorial integrity of member States; to entrench interdependence; and to complete the transition from the old order based on political and economic domination, to one established on equitable cooperation amongst all nations.

This is the only way to build a future of global peace, stability, and prosperity. It is the only way to enhance the dialogue between civilizations; to make multilateralism more effective; and to provide for sustainable development and eradicate poverty throughout the world. And it is the only way to effectively fight terrorism and cross-border organized crime, and promote nuclear disarmament.

We must also work more in concert with one another on combating the effects of climate change. This will continue to be strongly emphasized over the course of Serbia's two year presidency of the Governing Council of UNEP, or the United Nations Environmental Programme. Integral to our efforts, we have proposed the establishment of a Regional Climate Change Center in Belgrade.

As a responsible global citizen, we have underlined the necessity of agreeing on a fair and balanced emissions reduction scheme, and especially on a new comprehensive climate agreement—one that will secure eco-friendly investments, stimulate innovation, and facilitate the global spread of technologies, knowledge, and experience.

In short, working towards a "green economy" will decisively contribute to putting the whole world firmly on the path towards a cleaner, more sustainable path.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The way we conduct ourselves in this time of great transformation will constitute a precedent with far-reaching consequences for generations to come. Simply put, we are at a point of decision: will we choose a world in which there are no rules, as exceptions become the new norms devoid of any meaning except “might makes right”? Or will we opt to solidify the great gains achieved when the principles of an equitable international order were embodied in the UN Charter?

I believe only the latter alternative provides a future all UN member States can work in concert to bring about. The starting point remains the universal respect for international law. No one should be above it, no one should stand beyond its reach, and no one should feel at liberty to declare an exception to its jurisdiction and scope.

And yet, that is precisely what was recently attempted.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I come before you as the president of a country that has become caught at the heart of one of the most dangerous challenges to the universality of the international system since the founding of the United Nations.

I speak of UDI—the unilateral declaration of independence by the ethnic-Albanian authorities of Serbia's southern province of Kosovo and Metohija.

This attempt at secession stands in direct violation of Serbia's democratic Constitution, and the basic principles of the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Some say Kosovo's UDI is a unique case. But in truth, it amounts to an attempt at forcibly partitioning a member State of the United Nations against its will—and with disregard for the firm opposition of the Security Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kosovo's UDI is an attempt to impose a 19th-century outcome to a 21st-century challenge.

Serbia will never, under any circumstances, implicitly or explicitly, recognize the unilateral declaration of independence of the ethnic-Albanian authorities of our southern province.

We will continue to vigorously defend our integrity in a non-confrontational manner—using all peaceful means at our disposal.

That is why, from the very onset of this grave crisis, Serbia ruled out the use of force. We chose to respond to Kosovo's UDI with utmost responsibility and restraint. Serbia opted for a diplomatic approach—the result of which is that a vast majority of UN member States have refrained from recognizing Kosovo's UDI. They have continued to abide by their UN Charter obligations to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country.

On behalf of the Republic of Serbia, allow me once again to sincerely thank these countries for their adherence to the principles of international law.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While rejecting violence and unilateralism categorically, Serbia has been equally emphatic in demanding that justice be delivered through the proper legal means at the disposal of any UN member State.

As a part of our constructive approach, we decided to contest the UDI issue before the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice—tasked by United Nations General Assembly resolution to issue an advisory opinion on whether Kosovo's UDI is in accordance with international law.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the member States that the International Court of Justice has concluded the preliminary, written phase of its proceedings in the Kosovo UDI case. Verbal hearings are scheduled to begin on December 1st, with a decision by the Court expected to be sometime next year.

Let me express my sincere gratitude to all those countries which have not recognized Kosovo's UDI, as well as to those which have chosen to actively support Serbia's strategic choice to transfer the Kosovo UDI issue to the judicial arena.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kosovo UDI case marks the first time in the history of the Court that it has been asked to consider the legality of an attempt at secession by an ethnic group from a UN member State.

There is no doubt that the Court's conclusions will constitute a powerful legal precedent, with over-arching consequences for the United Nations system. The outcome will either strongly deter other separatist movements from attempting to secede, or produce a result that could encourage them to act in similar fashion. Plainly said, should Kosovo's UDI be allowed to stand, a door would open for challenging the territorial integrity of *any* UN member State.

The uniquely important nature of this case has been acknowledged by the international community. Indicatively, all five permanent members of the Security Council have confirmed their participation in the verbal hearings before the ICJ.

It is in this context that I appeal to all member States to respect the fact that the International Court of Justice continues to be actively engaged on the issue. Its deliberations should not be pre-judged, and its work should not be obstructed. The Court's proceedings have to be allowed to run their course, unhindered by political pressures, such as further recognitions of Kosovo's UDI.

On behalf of the Republic of Serbia, I encourage all non-recognizing UN member States to stay the course. By maintaining respect for my country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, together we will help ensure that international law continues to close in on UDI.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Serbia's decision to turn to the International Court of Justice to adjudicate the UDI issue has been complemented by a policy of constructive engagement with all legitimate actors on the ground in Kosovo.

We maintain support for a reconfigured UNMIK and its continuing indispensability. We have also welcomed a status-neutral EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) working in our southern province on the basis of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) that continues to operate under the overall authority of the United Nations.

I call on all responsible stakeholders invested in the future of Kosovo to work more closely with the Government of Serbia on implementing in full the Secretary-General's Six Point Plan, welcomed by the Security Council in November 2008.

This is a time for leadership and working together not to increase the divide. We all have our constraints, and they should be respected. Yet working at cross-purposes serves no constructive purpose. Let us create new opportunities for achieving practical results, by engaging with one another on a whole host of concrete, bread-and-butter questions, for the benefit of all residents of the province, including the Serbs—the most at-risk community in all of Europe.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

La démocratie serbe est sûre, notre société est bien solide, et nos valeurs ont été fortement entérinées par la loi.

La base de notre approche stratégique au développement national est la vocation essentielle au destin partagé par toutes les nations européennes.

Nous avons fait preuve à maintes reprises, par les actes concrets et dans des circonstances très difficiles, de notre détermination à devenir membre de l'Union Européenne.

Malgré les écueils, notre priorité stratégique centrale demeure le statut de membre au sein de l'UE – non seulement pour des raisons de géographie, héritage et prospérité économique, mais également en raison des valeurs essentiels que nous partageons.

Des valeurs prônant le « soft power » à l'extérieur et la primauté du droit à l'intérieur, l'aboutissement au consensus à Bruxelles, et les standards des droits de l'homme à travers toute l'Union. Et des valeurs prônant la liberté de déplacement pour tous les citoyens de Serbie à travers la zone de Schengen – un résultat tangible de notre processus d'adhésion à l'UE, ce que nous espérons voir se mettre en œuvre le 1^{er} janvier 2010. Ceci nous rapprochera à l'Europe, car le droit de voyager sans visa étant l'incarnation quotidienne de l'UE aux yeux des citoyens de la Serbie.

Mais également les valeurs nous ayant mené à moderniser notre administration, adopter une législation exemplaire antidiscriminatoire et de protection des minorités, ainsi que les efforts renforcés pour la réconciliation régionale. C'est une raison importante pour laquelle la Serbie est sur le point de d'achever sa coopération pleine et entière avec le Tribunal pénal international pour l'ex-Yougoslavie – c'est une

obligation tant morale que légale vis-à-vis des victimes, vis-à-vis nous-mêmes, et avant tout, vis-à-vis les générations futures.

En approchant le 20^e anniversaire de la chute du mur de Berlin, il ne faut pas oublier que l'objectif de réunir toutes les nations de l'Europe sous le même toit, n'a pas encore été atteint. Il y en a encore beaucoup à faire. La fatigue de l'élargissement ne devrait pas émerger en tant qu'une nouvelle réalité en Europe. La solidarité doit restée haut placée sur l'échelle. Il ne sera jamais temps d'envisager une stratégie de sortie lorsqu'il s'agit des Balkans occidentaux.

Permettez-moi de souligner que les faits sont clairs. Tous profitent de l'élargissement : les anciens et les nouveaux membres, tout comme les membres potentiels de l'UE. Ceci vaut au-delà de nos rêves les plus fous – même à l'heure des défis économiques, et même à l'heure d'une démoralisation politique. Ceci vaut parce que les valeurs nous reliant entre nous sont fortes, et parce qu'elles sont justes.

In this context, let me underline the necessity of strengthening regional cooperation. In June, Serbia hosted 15 heads of state during the Central European Summit, whose main topic was interdependence between the economy, EU integration, and energy. This demonstrated our commitment to act constructively and work closely with neighboring countries to ensure that regional peace is consolidated.

With regards to Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia is a guarantor of the Dayton Agreement. Let there be no doubt that we will remain committed to our neighboring country's sovereignty and territorial integrity—as we will regarding all other UN member States, in the region and across the world.

In short, as the strategic anchor of stability in the Western Balkans, Serbia will invest ever greater efforts to complete the democratic transformation of our part of Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Serbia's robust European vision is complemented by our strong determination to pursue a carefully balanced, artfully executed, and active foreign policy, aimed at engagement with nations throughout the world, near and far.

This is in our lasting interest, and will not change.

As such, our engagement with Brussels, Moscow, Washington and Beijing—the four lasting pillars of Serbia's foreign policy—will continue to be strengthened in the time ahead.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I want to emphasize another important dimension of our foreign policy engagement.

Serbia will continue to deepen ties with proud nations across the globe—many of which are members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My country is the largest successor to a founding member of the Movement. Serbia's capital, Belgrade, was the site of the First NAM Summit in 1961. That is why I have proposed that the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement be celebrated in Belgrade, with an extraordinary Summit under the auspices of the Egyptian chairmanship.

Let me underline that Serbia will continue to engage with NAM countries not only for the sake of honoring a legacy from the past or renewing traditional friendships. But because we believe international stability and prosperity cannot be consolidated without taking into account the views of the majority of the global family of nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I close by saying that the time for anyone to procrastinate, to try half-measures, to use soothing words and baffling expedients that delay and discourage, is coming to a close. In its place, we are entering a period where only results matter—a period of consequence and momentous choice.

Now comes our time of testing.

Transformative moments such as this one come along rarely. They are either seized or lost, and the effects can reach across decades. The opportunity is here. We must grasp it and nurture it, so that it grows strong and good.

Our vision is simple: the universal application of the principles contained in the United Nations Charter; the strengthening of international law and human rights in an increasingly interdependent world; the equitable development of the global economy; and the sustainable management of the environment throughout the world.

Let us all have the courage to see this vision through to its expeditious and noble completion.

Thank you for your attention.