



THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Security Council meeting
Security Council Resolutions
1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998),
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STATEMENT

by

H. E. Mr. BORIS TADIC
President of the Republic of Serbia

New York, 18 February 2008

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of the southern Serbian Province of Kosovo and Metohija, under Interim United Nations administration, unilaterally and illegally declared their independence on Sunday, 17 February.

The illegal declaration of independence by the Kosovo Albanians constitutes a flagrant violation of UNSC resolution 1244 which reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia including Kosovo and Metohija. Serbia, let me recall, is a member State and a founder of the United Nations.

If a small, peace-loving and democratic country in Europe, a member State of the United Nations, can be deprived of its territory illegally and against its will, historic injustice will have occurred because a legitimate democracy has never before been punished in this way.

The Serbian State was born in Kosovo and it represents the central part of our identity. I shall be frank with you: this is a situation in which a peace-loving country, in which a proud and European people lives, is being snatched of a part of its identity, tradition and history. This act annuls international law, tramples upon justice and enthrones injustice.

The representatives of some countries present at this table keep telling us openly that Slobodan Milošević is the culprit for the situation in Kosovo and that due to his mistakes it is being granted independence. Let me tell you, today is February 2008, Slobodan Milošević is there no more, and in 1999, when he was in power in Serbia, Kosovo was not granted independence.

I wish to recall here in this United Nations body that the Albanians demanded independence and worked actively for secession from Serbia for decades even before Slobodan Milošević.

With your permission, I shall also recall that in that very same 1999 the citizens of Serbia were unjustly and severely punished by 3 months of bombing.

Eight years later, a now democratic and peace-loving Serbia is being punished again by being deprived of a part of its territory. Indeed, this form of logic and this form of justice are impossible to explain or comprehend.

Independence is granted to an ethnic community in our Province which has been administered by the United Nations and the Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self-Government for eight years now and they have done nothing all these years to enable the remaining Serbs and other non-Albanians to live a life worthy of human dignity. Independence is conferred upon those who, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, created in Europe Serbian ghettos girdled with barbed wire and surrounded with cannon barrels and soldiers armed to the teeth.

The reward is being bestowed on those who have taken part in the segregation of Serbs and to those who deny them freedom of movement, who force them to live in darkness and in constant fear for their lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After 1999, 250 000 Serbs and other non-Albanians have been expelled from Kosovo and in mid-March 2004, militant and extremist members of the Albanian community in Kosovo burned 35 churches and monasteries and 800 houses in only 3 days, while another 5 000 Serbs and other non-Albanians fled their homes. Is the independence of Kosovo a just reward for all that I have enumerated?

Another argument that has been invoked in favour of granting independence to the Albanians has been the contention that they would resort to violence otherwise. Whoever may support Kosovo's independence must realize that this act legalizes the threat of violence as a means of creating new States and promoting one's own political agendas and interests.

If you allow this illegal act to stand, you will show that right and justice may go unrespected in the world. You will show that, unfortunately, this body of the world Organization is losing its authority.

After this act, the world will no longer be the same.

Serbia, a European State, will continue to fight for law and justice in a dignified, peaceful and civilized way in such a world as well. We shall never give up our legitimate interests and shall continue our peaceful and diplomatic struggle in pursuit of our legitimate European perspective.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All United Nations member States are represented in this building. A large number of countries all over the world are plagued by the problem similar to Serbia's. Imagine you were in my place: The President of the country which is being deprived of a part of its territory against its will. How would you feel and how would you respond?

I am asking this question of you because if you cast a blind eye to this illegal act, who guarantees to you that parts of your countries will not declare independence in the same illegal way. Who can guarantee to you that a blind eye will not be cast to the violation of the Charter of the United Nations, which guarantees the sovereignty and integrity of each State, when your country's turn comes up?

The question before you is this: Are we all aware of the precedent that is being set and are we aware of the catastrophic consequences that it may lead to?

Mr. President,

The Security Council and all United Nations member States are bound by Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia.

This is provided by UNSC resolution 1244 and Serbia, as a sovereign country, requests that, in deciding how to respond to the arbitrary act of the Kosovo Albanians, the Security Council abide by international law, the principles of international justice, the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of this Council's resolution.

The Republic of Serbia will not accept the violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Government of Serbia and the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia have declared the decision of the Priština authorities null and void. Likewise, we are taking all diplomatic and political measures to prevent the secession of a part of our territory.

As a responsible member of the international community, committed to a peaceful and negotiated settlement of disputes, the Republic of Serbia will not resort to force. No crisis has ever been resolved successfully by force. Only human lives are destroyed by force.

The Security Council may avert, by its decision, the setting of a precedent which will cause irreparable damage to the international order.

The unilateral and illegal declaration of the independence of Kosovo runs afoul of the first principle of the Charter of the United Nations, i.e. the sovereign equality of all member States, in the most direct way.

I repeat: there are dozens of various Kosovos in the world and all of them lie in wait for Kosovo's act of secession to become a reality and to be established as an acceptable norm. I warn you most seriously of the danger of the escalation of many of existing conflicts, the flaring up of frozen conflicts and the instigation of new ones.

Mr. President,

My country requests that the Security Council take effective measures in order to ensure that all the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and UNSC resolution 1244 are fully respected. The Security Council must therefore react urgently and annul the unilateral and illegal act of the secession of Kosovo from the Republic of Serbia. We request from you, from the Security Council, to reaffirm the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia which includes Kosovo.

We request of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and his Special Representative for Kosovo, to use their powers. Special Representative Rucker must receive clear and unequivocal instructions to use his reserved powers under the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo within the shortest period and declare the act null and void. We also request that he dissolve the Kosovo Assembly because its declaration of independence is contrary to UNSC resolution 1244. The Special Representative has binding powers and they have been used before. I request that the Special Representative use them again.

Pursuant to paragraph 9 of UNSC resolution 1244, the international security presence in Kosovo, KFOR, must remain status-neutral. It is responsible for the protection of life and property of the Serbs and all other non-Albanian communities in the Province.

KFOR must, Mr. President, show special care for the most vulnerable, for the Kosovo Serbs, as well as for the clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church and our churches and monasteries, some of which have been placed on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger. These holy places are the crucibles of Serbian identity, tradition and our history.

The Republic of Serbia wishes to believe that KFOR is capable of preventing all violence against the Serbian population and the cleansing of our religious heritage.

Mr. President,

At this moment we are faced with the challenge of unilateral declaration of independence and the decision of some countries to recognize the illegal establishment of a State on the territory of a sovereign State and this will, let me reiterate, have unfathomable consequences.

I consider that such a decision legalizes the ethnic cleansing carried out against the Serbs in 1999 after the arrival of KFOR and UNMIK in Kosovo. The States that recognize the independence of the Serbian

Province would take, by such an act, the responsibility for a possible new ethnic cleansing campaign directed against the Serbs remaining in Kosovo and Metohija.

All the Albanians who were in Kosovo in 1999 are there today. But 250 000 Serbs who lived in Kosovo prior to 1999 do not live in their homes any more; they live in refugee camps in central Serbia.

How many Serbs will return to their homes in Kosovo and Metohija if it becomes independent? Are you aware that this illegal decision sends them a message not to return because they are not wanted there...

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe in regional peace and stability. I believe that long-lasting peace and stability can be achieved only by negotiations and compromise solutions. I am convinced that only a peaceful and stable Balkans may bring economic prosperity to all its citizens. Unilateral decisions, like the one taken in Priština, cannot contribute to a legitimate solution and do not favour this perspective of regional peace and security. We all must understand this, and we must invest additional efforts to bring about a legitimate solution.

I would like to point out once again that Serbia threatens violence to no one. On the contrary, our strength is the pursuit of the policy of peace. Our strength is in powerful arguments by which we fight for right and justice.

In this, historically important moment for Serbia, our strength is in our resolve to embrace and protect the life of each and every man and woman, to preserve our integrity, as well as the integrity of all other countries. Our strength is in our determination to preserve the stability and dignity of our country and the prospects of the region in which we live.

We owe this to ourselves, as well as to the generations that are yet to be born. All peoples of the Balkans need peace, stability and development. All our children need it and we must achieve it.

Here in the Security Council of the United Nations I say clearly and unequivocally: Serbia will never recognize the independence of Kosovo. We shall never renounce Kosovo and we shall not give up the struggle for our legitimate interests. For the citizens of Serbia and its institutions, Kosovo will forever remain a part of Serbia.

Thank you, Mr. President.