



Address to the North Atlantic Council on
the Occasion of the Presentation of the Partnership for Peace
Presentation Document

by H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić
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Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

It is my distinct honor to address the North Atlantic Council on the day the Republic of Serbia formally submits our Partnership for Peace Presentation Document.

This is an important day for the Republic of Serbia and our democracy, for the Western Balkans as a whole, and for the Euro-Atlantic community of nations.

Today we confirm Serbia's clear readiness to play a constructive role in consolidating the security architecture of Southeast Europe.

Excellencies,

We all know that the recent history of relations between my country and NATO has been a difficult one. We will never be able to forget the tragic events that took place in 1999.

But I am not here to dwell on the past. The key to democratic politics, especially in a recently democratized country, is to offer a vision of security and prosperity to one's citizens.

And so we look forward, not back. By working together, in the spirit of mutual trust and respect, we can ensure that conflict and destruction never happen again in our part of Europe.

Throughout the region, issues of trust must be resolved; dilemmas about intent have to disappear; a 21st-century sense of purpose should be created; and shallow, outdated concepts of national defense must be overcome.

They will. For this day marks the beginning of a fresh chapter in the history of democratic freedom in Southeast Europe.

Excellencies,

The strategic priority of the Government of Serbia is to rapidly move the country toward full EU membership. In fact, the aspiration to join the European Union is a goal common to all the countries of the Western Balkans.

Another strategic priority is to be actively engaged in our Partnership for Peace activities, and to consolidate our Euro-Atlantic prospects. Soon we will sign the Security Agreement, and open our Mission to NATO, so we can get to work delivering the benefits of PfP membership to the citizens of our country and our region.

I believe that without this twin perspective emanating out of Brussels, the incentives to reform and cooperate in our part of the world could be dramatically diminished. The Western Balkans could return to division and strife—and hatred, and conflict, and terrible misery. Stability would not take root, and prosperity would remain illusive.

That is why forming a security partnership between countries based on shared values has a special meaning for us. It intensifies communication, and it makes true regional cooperation possible.

And it signals that we fully respect the cornerstone documents that inform how the Euro-Atlantic community of nations is guided in the international arena—documents such as the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

A crucial component in building an undivided Europe is reconciliation. Democracy cannot flourish without a full and open account of the past. That is why the Republic of Serbia is strongly committed to full and immediate cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former-Yugoslavia. The few indictees still at-large must be located, arrested, and handed over to the Hague.

This is not only our international obligation; it is our moral duty—to our neighbours and the world, of course, but foremost to ourselves.

Excellencies,

It is our solemn duty to work together to make Europe truly whole, free and at peace.

Our Presentation Document is a written statement of my country's fundamental commitment to fulfill this crucial endeavour. It affirms in no uncertain terms that Serbia believes in a strategy of intensive regional security cooperation and Euro-Atlantic engagement.

It lays out in detail the priority fields of cooperation the Republic of Serbia wishes to undertake within the framework of the Partnership for Peace.

It also expresses Serbia's future objective of enhancing the interoperability of our Armed Forces with those of the Alliance. We pledge to speed up our ongoing defense reform process, and to ensure that our officer training and education programmes are in line with NATO standards.

Excellencies,

The security environment in which we operate has evolved. Today's world is more interdependent, less coherent, and less predictable.

The dangers posed by conventional military threats have lessened, while dangers posed by unconventional ones—such as rogue regimes, terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, ethnic and religious extremism, organized crime—have dramatically increased since the end of the Cold War.

That is why we have expressed our readiness to participate in peacekeeping missions conducted under the flag of the United Nations—so as to assist post-conflict societies to rebuild and reconstruct, as is being done already in various parts of the world, including Serbia's southern province of Kosovo and Metohija.

And that is why we are committed to working together to prevent when possible—and contain when necessary—those forces bent on destroying the values that inform our vision and our partnership.

Excellencies,

I would like to talk to you about the future status of Kosovo—the most important outstanding security issue in Europe.

From the onset of negotiations, the Republic of Serbia has consistently argued for a compromise solution that seeks to reconcile Belgrade's legitimate demands with those of Pristina. I wish to express cautious optimism that the new, Troika-led negotiations will produce such a solution. It is the only way forward, and presents the best hope for the consolidation of democracy and stability in the region.

I believe that any other course of action is bound to produce winners and losers. That would be a profound mistake, for the Balkans is a place where revenge for perceived wrongs and losses has historically been a cause of endless grievances.

Were the imposition of independence to take place—in other words, were the Security Council to be circumvented—a dangerous precedent would be created, despite all attempts to claim otherwise. This precedent would contribute to the undermining of the architecture of international order by legitimizing the forced partition of a democratic state. It would lead us into a situation that would almost certainly spiral out of control, and call into question the great moral leap of the break with the past we began with the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic.

This cannot be in the interest of the countries represented in this room.

Clearly, there remains a significant gap between the current positions of Belgrade and Pristina. But if a real attempt at negotiating takes place, then I sincerely believe that compromise can be reached.

Furthermore, paradoxical as it may sound at first blush, *not* imposing deadlines on the negotiation process will likely lead to a more rapid settlement of Kosovo's future status. For setting no firm deadlines concentrates minds by dis-incentivizing parties to simply wait out the clock.

Excellencies,

Abraham Lincoln, in his Second Inaugural, delivered in the closing days of the American Civil War laid out a moral doctrine of conduct no less right today than on the day his words were spoken. "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right [...], let us strive on to finish the work we are in, [...] to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Let us therefore confirm our commitment to finish the hopeful work of peace, the work we are in. To channel that hope, to remove fear, and to restore confidence. To come together in the democratic spirit of collective security. To consolidate the gains made. And to create a better era in a better world. For ourselves, and for the generations to come.

Thank you.
