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REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Opening Plenary Session**

**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Dejan Šahović,  
Delegation of the Republic of Serbia**

**Warsaw, 24 September - 5 October 2007**

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Distinguished colleagues,

It is an honor and pleasure to address this opening session of the 12<sup>th</sup> OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. I wish to join previous speakers in thanking the Government of Poland for hosting the meeting. Allow me also to use this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, the Foreign Minister of Spain, H.E. Miguel Angel Morations and his team for their dedicated work and determination in implementing the Spanish human dimension priorities.

My delegation is particularly pleased that the new OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Knut Vollebaek is with us. We highly appreciate that he decided at the beginning of his work as High Commissioner to visit Belgrade and Priština and we are looking forward to working with him constructively during his mandate.

My delegation is also pleased to see again, a large number of participants at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, including representatives of civil society. This is yet another proof of our collective understanding that active participation and constructive engagement in a dialogue is the best way to discuss the implementation of our human dimension commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligned with the statement of the European Union delivered by the distinguished representative of the Portuguese EU Presidency. I will, therefore, highlight only a few issues that we deem especially relevant from our national point of view.

The Republic of Serbia, also in its current capacity as the Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, is determined to support our common activities aimed at protecting and promoting human rights. Cooperation with other international organizations is high on the list of Serbia's Council of Europe Chairmanship priorities, including in the field of human rights and of course including with the OSCE.

In Serbia, human rights, including the rights of national minorities, are comprehensively guaranteed under the new Constitution that was adopted last year. All persons are equal before the Constitution and before the law. Progress that has been made in

our country in many areas of democratic reforms, including the implementation of OSCE commitments in the human dimension field, has been acknowledged also in the regular reports of the OSCE Mission to Serbia. However, like in any country in the process of transition, challenges are still many. Looking into the future, we count on the continued support of the OSCE within the mandate of its Mission in Serbia, for various reform activities that are underway in our country and, especially, in finding durable solutions for issues that are relevant to the human dimension.

The topics to be discussed at this meeting, such as promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, mutual respect and understanding, fundamental freedoms, humanitarian issues and in particular, one of the key human rights issues – enabling sustainable return for refugees and displaced persons, are extremely relevant for my country. In this context, allow me to draw your attention to the extremely difficult human rights situation in our Province of Kosovo and Metohija, which is under international administration for over eight years now, in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1244. We recognize the efforts of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, but we strongly believe that this Mission should strengthen its efforts, within the existing mandate, again based on UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Our delegation will address the situation in Kosovo and Metohija in more detail under the relevant agenda items.

Mr. Chairman,

We are very much interested in engaging in fruitful discussions in thematic working sessions and we stand ready to take an active part and contribute to a successful outcome of the debates.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the ODIHR and Director Strohal for organizing this meeting and express the confidence of our delegation that its deliberations and outcome will be to the benefit of all OSCE participating States.

I thank you.