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Security Council

Sixty-third year

5839th meeting

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New York

[Extract]

*Security Council resolutions
1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999)
and 1244 (1999)*

Mr. Ambassador Ricardo Alberto Arias
Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Panama.

At the outset, allow me to welcome the President of Serbia, Mr. Boris Tadić, and his Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Vuk Jeremić. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his presence at this most important meeting of the Security Council.

Regarding the topic before us, which focuses on Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, we reiterate that Panama would always have preferred for the parties to reach a negotiated way to resolve their differences. Such outcomes are of particular value if we compare what has taken place with the requirements of the times we live in. The time for thinking about secession is behind us, and the emphasis is now on finding options involving multi-ethnic and regional integration. We regret that that did not take place, but we accept that events have created a new reality, which several States, in particular in Europe, accept as valid.

Looking at this socio-political reality, we must all give priority to developing peaceful coexistence among human beings, over and above geo-political interests. Such peaceful coexistence is particularly important in a globalized world where traditional physical borders are increasingly less important; a world where the circulation of goods, ideas and people is more intense every day; a world in which, although some still try to deny it, we cannot live without each other. This is why the United Nations now promotes important initiatives to bring about understanding, rapprochement and cooperation among diverse cultures, ethnic groups and religions.

This is why we appeal to the leadership in Serbia and in Kosovo to rise above past conflicts, to recognize reality and to seek, however difficult this may be, the necessary mechanisms to bring about peaceful coexistence among their inhabitants and with their neighbouring countries. In this context, we have taken note of the declarations of the parties about not using violence as a way to defend interests or resolve differences.

At another level, Panama has always been concerned, and has stated this before, that what occurred in Kosovo should not be used as an example in other situations that appear to be similar. Nevertheless, we must not and we cannot forget that Kosovo enjoyed an autonomy very much like the autonomy of the old republics of greater Yugoslavia, and an attempt was made to deprive it of that autonomy; that Kosovo has been administered for over eight years by the United Nations under a regime of growing self-government; and that a significant majority of the Governments in the region have expressed the intention to recognize Kosovo's declaration of independence.

This being so, we appeal to the European Union, and particularly to the countries that have supported the declaration of independence of Kosovo, to make sure that today's political secession is soon resolved within that Union through the prompt incorporation of both Serbia and Kosovo within that regional organization.

We feel compelled to refer to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). However much we attempt to gloss over the fact, its mandate has been overtaken by the realities that we see today. This is undeniable, as is the fact that when it was adopted, unlike other mandates of the Security Council, no deadline was set. That, to a considerable degree, was the reason why Council members were not able to agree on how to adjust the mandate as circumstances required. Let this be a lesson to us so that in the future all Council resolutions will have a clear deadline, so that the deadlines, instead of simply being extended, will be modified and readjusted to bring them into consistency with the realities they are trying to affect.