



**STATEMENT BY MS. MIROSLAVA BEHAM,
AMBASSADOR OF SERBIA,
ON THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN SERBIA
AT THE 713th MEETING OF
THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 May 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first to thank my distinguished colleagues for the kind words of support and the congratulations addressed to us. It is always pleasant, encouraging and really inspiring to hear positive assessments of Serbia.

Mr. Chairman,

Serbia and her citizens have proved once again that they not only believe in democracy and its principles and procedures, but are truly and deeply committed to implement them. On 8 March 2008 Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica announced that, due to major disagreements within the ruling coalition which lead to a deadlock of the Government, the mandate has to be given back to the people of Serbia to decide on the country's future. His request for early Parliamentary elections was readily accepted by President Boris Tadić, and the citizens cast their votes on Sunday, 11 May, displaying their democratic commitment by a strong voter turnout of 61.01% in free and fair elections.

“Elections in Serbia are always a celebration of democracy”, the Speaker of the Serbian Assembly, Oliver Dulić, said in January this year, in the run-up to the Presidential elections. We are very pleased to note that the assessments of the international election observers confirm this optimistic view. As Mr. Roberto Battelli, head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observers and Special Coordinator of the Chairman-in-Office concluded: “The Serbian elections were a display of a mature democracy in action. We found some minor technical faults and some aspects of the campaign were worrisome, but the elections were carried out in a most impressive fashion with substantive voter turnout and efficiency and calmness of the voting”.

The results of the elections are known. The five-party coalition “For a European Serbia” led by President Boris Tadić gained 38.44 % of the votes, the Serbian Radical Party 29.36 %. The two-party coalition led by Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica obtained 11.59 %, the three-party coalition led by the Socialists 7.6 % and the Liberal Democratic Party 5.3 %. In the composition of the new Serbian Assembly the Hungarian, Bosniak and Albanian minorities will be represented with seven seats.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to take this opportunity and thank all international election observers for their discerning, amicable and committed efforts, notably the International Election Observation Mission of ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, further the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the State Duma of the Russian Federation, the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, the Russian Public Institute of Electoral Law, the Embassies of Slovakia and Hungary and others. Let me express our sincere gratitude for the excellent co-operation with all of them.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic Electoral Commission of Serbia will announce the final results next week, since the elections have to be repeated in three places this Sunday, 18 May. After that, the Parliament has to be constituted within 30 days by the verification of at least two-thirds of the mandates. The establishment of the Parliament will initiate a 90 days period of time, within which the new government has to be formed.

Since Serbia is a “mature democracy in action”, as Mr. Battelli put it - and a very pluralistic one, if I may add - the forming of a new coalition government could take a while – as it does sometimes in other mature democracies, as well. Of course, our leadership will undertake all efforts to come to an agreement on a new government rather sooner than later. There are some challenges waiting for Serbia to be tackled strongly and efficiently.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.