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STATEMENT BY
H.E. MR. BESNIK MUSTAJ,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

60TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GENERAL DEBATE

New York, 21 September 2005

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me first convey, on behalf of the people and the government of Albania the most profound sentiments of sympathy, friendship and solidarity to the American people and President Bush for the lives lost and the material damages caused by Hurricane Katrina. My government has also offered a modest package of aid for this disaster.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on undertaking the Presidency of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in performing this very important task. I take this opportunity to assure you of the full cooperation of my country in accomplishing the undertakings ahead of us.

Let me also add the voice of my delegation to those that have already thanked your predecessor, Mr. Ping, for the dedication he demonstrated in chairing the previous session of the General Assembly and the efforts he invested in the revitalization of the work of our Organization.

Mr. President,

Albania has aligned itself with the Statement of the UK Presidency of the EU, delivered by the Foreign Secretary HE Mr. Jack Straw. On behalf of the new Albanian government, which took office after the recent parliamentary elections, I am privileged to address this distinguished forum and put forward some positions of my country regarding certain issues concerning all the international community, as well as on some strategic priorities of this government in the field of foreign policy.

The fact that a large number of heads of state and government were assembled only a few days ago in the United Nations to assess the achievements related to the implementation of MDG-s as well as to discuss about the reform of the organization, should be considered as a strong affirmation that multilateralism is a driving force for global policies. This confirms once again that we are living in a very complex and multidimensional situation, which obviously requires comprehensive, global and immediate reactions.

The necessity for an enhancing regional and global cooperation has never confronted us with more intensity. Therefore, Albania supports the outcomes of the High Level Plenary Meeting regarding the further reaffirmation of our faith in the Organization, the importance of the core values and principles for international cooperation, global partnership for development, concerted actions for strengthening the collective security and peace, fighting terrorism, promoting human rights and the rule of law as well as strengthening the UN and in particular its comprehensive reformation.

Albania believes that the 60-th Session of the UN General Assembly will constitute an important and significant step towards the implementation of the above-mentioned commitments by taking concrete and prompt actions.

Albania shares the view that the UN should be further strengthened in order to continue to play a decisive role in the efforts of the international community to create a safer, more stable and prosperous world. We would like to reiterate our appreciation for the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to reform the Organization. Albania shares the same views that the United Nations needs to have the legitimacy and agility to adapt itself with the circumstances of a changing world. In this respect, the Security Council has obviously a big responsibility. Albania fully supports the UN Security Council reform. On the other hand we assess this reform of the Security Council both from the perspective of improving the working methods and transparency, and from the perspective of adjusting the decision-making mechanisms. We maintain that, together, we have the proper powers and capacities to achieve the broadest consensus possible for this reform.

Nevertheless, the role of General Assembly, ECOSOC and Secretary General must not be underestimated since their capacities are not yet fully explored. The success of the UN reform will be fully ensured if the reform becomes coherent and comprehensive. Encouraged by the outcomes of the Final Declaration of the High Level Plenary Meeting on the strengthening of the United Nations, Albania reaffirms its position to cooperate with all delegations with a view to achieving the broadest consensus possible on the most important issues of the reform.

Albania believes that the Peace-Building Commission will be a necessary and efficient instrument to develop more coherent, consistent and better founded strategies for sustained political attention to a country as it makes the transition from conflict to sustained development. It would allow the UN to be more effective in galvanizing the work of the international community in this very important aspect and help countries in post conflict situation.

We believe that the attention, contributions and opinions aiming at the creation of a Human Rights Council will be soon finalized. An action-oriented Council with credible membership will enhance the UN engagement in this direction. We fully support the strengthening of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the increasing of its budget.

Albania endorses the initiative to establish the Democracy Fund as a significant component of the UN reform. We consider it an effective mechanism in supporting the new democracies. It will strengthen the civil society and democratic institutions in these countries.

Mr. President

The tragic events of last years have confirmed that terrorism is the most pressing threat posed to our world by taking thousands of innocent lives. *My* country will stay totally committed in fighting this common evil. We support the SC resolution 1624 adopted a few days ago and we join the other countries appealing for finalizing the Comprehensive Convention against Terrorism during the course of this session of the General Assembly. The affiliation of terrorism with the possession of weapons of mass destruction *can* bring about unprecedented consequences to humanity. My country considers arms control to be a pivotal instrument of its security policy. I would like to reiterate our continued support for the further strengthening of the major international disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. For these reasons, Albania is fully committed to cooperate in the region and wider, on disarmament and non-proliferation issues, whereas it has taken strong measures at the national level to prevent illicit trafficking of arms. Pursuant to the commitments on the control on small arms and light weapons the national legislation has been improved and brought closer to that of EU as regards licensing, strengthening import and export regimes and their possession. The destruction of about 200 000 small arms and light weapons, which were in the hands of civilians, has been part of the Albanian governments programs. In addition, in cooperation with foreign donors, a program for destruction of all chemical materials situated in the country, has been drafted, thus contributing to strengthening security in the region and wider.

Mr. President,

The year 2005 has been an electoral year for Albania. The parliamentary elections of last July and the orderly rotation of power constitute a substantial development of Albania's democratic maturity that will have a positive impact on future political, economic and social developments of the country.

Albania believes that good-governance is a key factor to the improvement of the life of its citizens. Good-governance is an important precondition in guaranteeing a sustainable economic growth as well as the eradication of poverty. In this respect, we will work to consolidate the rule of law, foster transparency in the decision-making process and increase the government's responsibility for serving our citizens. Fighting corruption and all related factors, promoting free competition and fighting unhesitatingly monopolies in economy will

be some of new Albanian government priorities in the coming years. A set of measures has been foreseen regarding the improvement of our national education system. Part of this action is the opening of universities doors for all students who want to finish higher studies. For the first time in its history, Albania has a woman elected as Speaker of Parliament, a strong signal of its serious commitments to work for gender equality.

The new government is decisive in its commitments towards the improvement of all macro-economic indicators of the country. It is convinced to develop social policies that would assure the gradual growth of standards and life conditions in general and of vulnerable people in particular. In order to achieve its objectives, the government will strongly support the development of the national financial system and its modernization, control the level of inflation as well as improve the legal framework in the related fields. In the framework of an excellent cooperation with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, we are determined to stimulate sound macro-economic policies and to promote more solid investments, which will guide the country towards sustainable development, encourage the private sector and promote employment. I would also like to assure you that the new Albanian government is fully committed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that the coordination and harmonization of the national development strategies with local ones, a broader participation of civil society, the involvement of private business, the raising public awareness and the promotion of public debates on identifying better and more effective ways for achieving the MDG-s will give the expected results in Albania.

The new Albanian government is determined to fight uncompromisingly against organized crime, transnational crime, illegal trafficking and terrorism. To that end, the government will strengthen the national legislation, law enforcement structures and relevant implementation mechanisms and will broaden its commitments in the regional and international level. This will bring my country closer with its neighbors and the European countries. This must be a common action for the sake of all of us.

My country has an excellent experience of coexistence among different religious communities. The strengthening of dialogue among different cultures, civilizations and religions is an important prerogative for the strengthening of peaceful coexistence and good neighborly relations. It is at the same time a great potential for the enhancement of cooperation among countries. On this basis, under the auspices of the President of Albania and the SG of UNESCO, an international forum was held in Tirana in December 2004 which addressed crucial issues of this dialogue and paved the way for a further cooperation in that regard in the future.

Mr. President,

My country is definitely on the path to Euro-Atlantic integration with a clear perspective of EU and NATO membership. We consider this membership would be a contribution to peace, stability and prosperity achieved in the Western European countries during the last 50 years. Integration in these structures means for us acknowledgment and acceptance of such values as economic and political freedom, fundamental human rights and freedoms, the rule of law, social prosperity and solidarity, simultaneously making our contribution to this community of values.

Albania is preparing for a faster conclusion of the Stabilization-Association Agreement with EU, paving the way for its signature. We are convinced that Albania will meet all the requirements of this process. The Albanian society is totally involved in the process of reforms, which is a strong prerequisite for the Stabilization and Association Process. These reforms are not being carried out for the sake of integration into EU, but first and foremost because they are in the interest of the country's progress and development, its economic growth and the improvement of Albania's image in the world.

NATO is considered as a guarantee in the field of security in our region. Through a wider cooperation with this Organization, our aim is full membership into it. The participation of

Albania in the peace-keeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Afghanistan, constitutes a real contribution to regional and global peace, security and stability.

Mr. President,

The ever better neighborly relations and cooperation with the countries of the region remain top priorities of our foreign policy. Our vision is clear: a safe and stabilized region that encourages a successful cooperation in bilateral and multilateral relations.

Our philosophy for the development of these relations is based on three fundamental pillars: transparency, tolerance and dialogue. In this context, the political dialogue of high levels has been intensified with all the countries of the region. The legal framework and institutional cooperation has been extended in bilateral and multilateral fields of common interest. This dialogue is becoming more constant and mature due to the existing atmosphere of mutual understanding and confidence.

Today, several of our countries through their participation in the peace-keeping missions have been transformed from consumers to contributors of peace and global security.

In the framework of the positive developments and progress in the region, Albania has played a progressive and constructive role with the Albanians in the region, promoting multiethnic coexistence, harmony and sustainable peace.

The Albanian foreign policy believes that the definition of the status of Kosova constitutes a crucial issue. There is no time to loose. The present *status quo* is inadequate for a sustained peace in the region. We are of the opinion that the final status of Kosova should be based on the free will of the Kosova people expressed through democratic means; it should offer the necessary guarantees for the full respect of the minority rights in Kosova. In this context, a conditional independence of Kosova shall permit the international community to observe for a certain period of time the full development of Kosova institutions and its society serving as a guarantee for the Serb's and other minorities living in this country.

We are convinced that the future of Kosova and of the whole region is the full integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

We believe that the report of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Kosova, Mr. Kai Aide provide an objective evaluation of the standards achieved so far in Kosova vis-à-vis the establishment of a democratic climate and the rule of law that would enable the start of the negotiations for the final status of Kosova.

The Contact Group has an important role to play in this process. There are some preliminary positive results. But there is a lot of work to be done for all of us to encourage and sustain the dialogue between Pristine and Belgrade. There are a lot of issues to be discussed. With the good will and the conviction in achieving the peace, we have a lot of reasons to be optimistic.

Thank you Mr. President.