**Conference notes IRRI-KIIB**

Conference chaired by Viscount Etienne Davignon, President of IRRI-KIIB

***" The European potentials of Serbia and Montenegro"***

**H.E. Mr. Vuk Draskovic**Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro
Brussels, 13 January 2005

Summary; this is not an official record of proceedings and specific remarks are not necessarily attributable.

Mr. Draskovic stated that the European potential of Serbia-Montenegro is very important. "We are the bridge between Europe and Asia, between the Balkans and Russia". The Minister was optimistic about the European future and also hoped for full support of Europe for entry of Serbia-Montenegro to the "Partnership for Peace".

According to him, the current focus is on fulfilling the conditions of access to the EU and the PfP. "Serbia-Montenegro is ready to implement international law". Minister Draskovic advocates "full cooperation with The Hague" (ICTY) if only because it forms an essential requirement for further movement towards EU integration. He is convinced that European potentials are respectable for all the areas of the Balkans. He emphasized that "Serbia-Montenegro has special European capacities because it forms the heart of the Western Balkans".

Turning to the status of Serbia-Montenegro, he stressed that he preferred a common state. "It's better to join the EU together", but he declared that democratic forces in Serbia will accept the results of a possible referendum about the status of the state when organised in Montenegro. He added that even in the case of independence of Montenegro, Serbia and Montenegro would stay together and melt again in Brussels. Thus he regards this issue as the last issue on the Serbian agenda.

Concerning the Kosovo status, he rejected extreme solutions such as "full sovereignty of Serbia" or "full independence of Kosovo", which could only result in new tragedies. A realistic solution accepted by Serbs, Albanians and by Europe must be found. Given a choice between Europeanization of the Balkans and Kosovo or balkanisation of Europe, the Minister obviously chooses the first option.

Mr. Draskovic indicated that the strategy of Serbia-Montenegro for the Kosovo state is "based on three E's":

* European level of protection for minorities; the full protection of all rights of minorities in Kosovo must be guaranteed and EU standards implemented
* European model of the centralisation of the power
* European status of the present state borders of former Yugoslav Republic; borders must be "of European quality"; i.e. open. "An open, European Kosovo, open to all sides. It's up to the citizens of Kosovo to choose the links they prefer with other Balkans Republics".

In practical terms, the three E's mean "more than autonomy, less than independence", according to Mr. Draskovic.

During the answer and question session he went on to further explain this statement. He reminded the audience of the fact that after 10 June 1999 the Serbs were expelled from Kosovo. He stated that it is an obligation for Europe to eliminate the consequences of ethnic cleansing. "A multi-ethnic Kosovo includes only 20% of the territory". The rest is settled by Albanians only. So, when we talk about "less than independence", we are talking about 20% of territory; for the rest, it is up to the Albanians to do what they want. We only want protection of minorities. Serbia will not be part of any problem, but rather part of a constructive solution".

He announced a very intensive Serbia-Montenegro dialogue with Kosovo very soon. The main objective pursued by his government was a "dialogue between Belgrade, Pristina and Brussels". He went on by stressing this appreciation for the good relations with Tirana and saying he expected to meet his Albanian colleague in Belgrade.

Further information:

-Minister Vuk Draskovic: <http://www.mfa.gov.yu/Officials/draskovic_e.html>

-Serbia and Montenegro Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Public Diplomacy : "EU to support state union's accession, Draskovic says in Brussels": <http://www.mfa.gov.yu/Pressframe13.htm>

-Information Directorate Serbia and Montenegro: <http://www.info.gov.yu/start.php?jezik=e>

-on EU's relations with Serbia-Montenegro: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/fry/index.htm>

- EU Press release: 21/02/2005 - [2641st Council meeting General Affairs and External Relations External Relations Brussels, 21 February 2005](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/gac/date/2005/02_210205_er.pdf): See Western Balkans

-OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro: <http://www.osce.org/sim/>

Report by Vanlauwe