



SERBIA

ROUND TABLE III
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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STATEMENT

by

**H.E. MR. BORIS TADIĆ
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

at

THE HIGH-LEVEL EVENT
ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

New York, 25 September 2008

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be able to address this High-Level Meeting of World Leaders dedicated to reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express gratitude to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for organizing this significant event. And I wish to thank him for his exemplary leadership on this crucial issue for the future of our planet.

The contemporary world is faced with the challenge of global, shared responsibility for development and environmental sustainability. To bring humankind and nature sustainably together—and to make this a theme of global governance—is the strategic goal that informs our work.

The good news is that decisive action and informed policy-making *can* pave the way to victory. At the halfway point towards the target date of 2015, significant progress has been made, but urgent and increased efforts are needed. The gaps need to be bridged.

I want to make it clear to you today that the Republic of Serbia fully understands that saving the environment stands as one of the defining challenges of the 21st century.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think we can all agree that there is a crucial need for introducing innovative financial mechanisms in the field of environmental protection.

At the national level, I would say that centralization of resources sometimes fails to do the job. And at the regional level, I say that we need to work on harmonizing our approaches even more.

A good example of just such an attempt is the Belgrade Initiative for Enhancing Sub-Regional Cooperation in the Field of Climate Change through Research and Systematic Observation, Education, Training, Public Awareness and Capacity-Building.

In my country and throughout southeast Europe, paying for municipal environmental infrastructure is a very important public policy priority. But it is becoming more difficult to cover the costs. In my view, the solution is closely linked with broader environmental policy reforms. Specifically, in the setting up of an efficient and decentralized system of environmental financing, and in finding ways to upgrade environmental infrastructure and monitoring systems.

But it is not just about finding ways to pay for environmental sustainability. On a broader, conceptual level, it is about working towards a knowledge-based economy. Inventive educational policies must be adopted. And awareness must be raised, so that further environmental degradation can be prevented, and sustainable development can be achieved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate change policy should be included in other sectoral policies, namely forestry, agriculture policy, energy and transport—as well as environmental protection and biodiversity protection.

Another crucial cluster for action is drinking water quality management, waste water purification and collection, as well as sanitation.

The Republic of Serbia has a proven track record of success in tackling these issues—not just at home, but abroad as well.

As a country that is the largest successor to a co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, Serbia worked hard in the past to assist other NAM member States in the sustainable water-management field.

In line with our commitment to continue restoring and deepening the many close friendships that Yugoslavia made across the globe during the post-World War Two period, my country is ready to engage with many countries in these fields.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, allow me to briefly inform you about the progress the Republic of Serbia has made to achieve greater environmental sustainability.

Serbia's National Working Group for MDGs established national goals and priorities related to our country-specific needs. We prepared a National Strategy for Sustainable Development, and a National Environmental Strategy.

We have also succeeded in integrating the principles of sustainable development into other sectoral strategies. We have made significant efforts to raise the percentage of total forest and nature protection areas. And we have also increased the share of renewable electricity in gross electricity consumption.

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And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, when you think of Serbia, of the new, environmentally-conscious Serbia, here's what I would like you to call to mind.

My country is deeply aware of its share of responsibility related to implementing Millennium Development Goals—be it at the local, national, regional, or the global level.

We are fully committed to prioritizing our legislative agenda to do so.

And we are willing, ready, and able, to assist other States in their efforts. Solidarity with the developing world is the only way to save the natural treasures of our planet, and ensure the health and prosperity for all of humankind.

Our survival depends on it. Our future cries out for it. And our children demand it.

Thank you very much for your attention.