



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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SIXTH COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 86

STATEMENT

by

Ms. Sandra Pejic

Counsellor

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia

to the United Nations

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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to thank the Assistant Secretary General for introducing the Secretary General's report which clearly demonstrates the commitment of the UN for strengthening of the rule of law as one of its high priorities.

We commend the Secretary-General for his leadership in advancing the issue of the rule of law. Serbia supports the activities of the United Nations in promoting the rule of law and the work of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group. These efforts should be based on the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter, i.e. on the respect of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that at the national level, rule of law is essential to political stability, economic growth and social development. That is why Serbia is fully committed to strengthening democratic society, based on the respect of human and minority rights and the rule of law. Under the Constitution of the country, the generally accepted norms of international law and confirmed international treaties and agreements are constituent parts of the domestic legal order and are applied directly. Serbia is a party to numerous international treaties of the United Nations, including human rights treaties. Also, we have actively cooperated with other international organizations, primarily with the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the field of the promotion of human and minority rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as in the strengthening of the rule of law and the democratization of society. A party to many international and regional human rights treaties, my country has staunchly supported the realization of their goals and has actively participated in the creation and implementation of new standards, aimed at further promoting and protecting human rights.

Serbia has established a strategic, legislative and institutional framework for the protection of human and minority rights. Its Constitution provides for equality and the right to equal legal protection of all without discrimination. Human and minority rights, guaranteed by the Constitution, are applied directly.

A European Union candidate country, Serbia has undertaken to carry out a thorough reform of its legislative framework, aimed at adopting the best standards and *acquis* of modern-day societies. In that, special attention is accorded to the rule of law and the protection of human rights. The reform includes the strengthening of institutional

capacities, freedom of the media and the promotion of human rights in each and every segment of its society.

Within the European Union accession process, Serbia has opened, among others, Negotiating Chapters 23 and 24 (judiciary and fundamental rights and justice, freedom and security). Accordingly, it proceeded to draft relevant Action Plans with a set of very ambitious reform steps. They are reflective of the best practices of the European countries and provide for clearly defined activities and distinct indicators. Their implementation is reviewed every four months and regular reports are submitted to the Government of Serbia and the European Commission.

Within the European integrations process, the Judicial Reform Strategy for 2013-2018 has been adopted with a relevant Action Plan and Constitutional Amendments have been drafted providing for the independence of the judiciary in line with the opinion of the Venice Commission, aimed at increasing the independence from the executive power.

The National Strategy for the Prosecution of War Crimes was adopted in 2016, aimed at creating conditions for improving investigation efficiency and war crimes prosecution.

Mr. Chairman,

Serbia firmly believes that international order, based on the rule of law and the international law, with clear rules, is a key prerequisite for preventing conflict and achieving sustainable peace. At the same time, the rule of law is at the core of the principles and activities of the United Nations; it plays the crucial role in the promotion and protection of human rights; and, as has been said time and again, the rule of law is a sine qua non in our pursuit of the SDGs and the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

Two decades ago, Serbia participated in the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and has remained firmly committed to this institution ever since. The ICC was established to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of the most serious international crimes. We, therefore, strongly support the further strengthening of the ICC institutional capacity and activities and expect all States and international organizations to cooperate with the ICC fully and unconditionally. The Rome Statute's acceptance should be universal.

My country strongly supports the work of the International Court of Justice, as one of the main organs of the UN. ICJ has irreplaceable role in peaceful settlement of international disputes.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my country's commitment to the strengthening of the rule of law at both the national and international level. The rule of law is the basis for ensuring legal security not only for individuals, but also for entire societies.

Thank you.