

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Application of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia To Join the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

November 9, 2000

Dear _____:

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) has indicated its preparedness to join the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as a participating state. Given the interest of the Congress in the question of FRY participation in international and regional organizations, as reflected, for example, in section 594(e) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2001, I want to inform you that the United States representative to the OSCE will support the FRY's application when the matter is considered before the OSCE Permanent Council on Friday, November 10. The decision is predicated on the FRY's recent actions, including those that indicate the FRY is approaching membership in regional and international organizations on the same basis as the other successor states, and is taking important steps towards resolving issues related to liabilities, assets, and property.

We have reviewed the FRY application and have concluded that the FRY has applied on the same basis that Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia applied to participate in the OSCE following the dissolution of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). This mirrors the approach taken by the FRY last week in applying as a new member to the United Nations.

The FRY's application on the same basis as other successors demonstrates what President Kostunica has told United States officials: that he is abandoning Milosevic's claim that the FRY is the continuation of the former SFRY. As applied to succession talks, this change removes a major impediment to progress in negotiations among the successor states by establishing that all are operating from a principle of equality. In this regard, the fact that all other successors sponsored the FRY's entry to the United Nations and have signaled a willingness to support entry to the OSCE reflects the importance of the step the FRY has taken.

In addition, President Kostunica has taken other steps to expedite succession discussions.

He has designated senior officials for the issue. These officials, in turn, have told United States Government officials that they intend to move quickly to reach an agreed solution. As a sign of the priority the new government attaches to this issue, during its first week in office, it received the designated international mediator, Sir Arthur Watts, to resume talks suspended under the previous regime. In their preliminary discussions with Watts this week, Yugoslav officials reviewed the prior negotiations and signaled their desire to make a fresh start and to seek rapid progress. These actions reflect a complete reversal of the previous government's position and represent reasonable and appropriate steps towards resolving successor state issues.

As succession discussions develop and the FRY applies to additional organizations, we will continue to work with FRY authorities, international mediators, and the other successor states to press for progress towards resolving these succession issues.

My Administration places great importance on the integration of the FRY into the international community through membership within regional and international organizations. Such integration will support President Kostunica's program on democratization and economic recovery, which, in turn, will help lead towards greater stability and support for democracy within Serbia, as well as increase cooperation with the FRY's neighbors and international community on meeting Belgrade's obligations under international law including cooperation with the International War Crimes Tribunal.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 10.