



RESOLUTION HONORING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY'S BALKAN SERVICE

March 6, 2019

WHEREAS, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) launched the South Slavic Languages Service on January 31, 1994, with programming in the Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian languages for the peoples of the former Yugoslavia and will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of these programs in 2019;

WHEREAS, RFE/RL's South Slavic Languages Service, later renamed the Balkan Service, has earned the trust and confidence of large audiences across the Western Balkans region with its multimedia reporting in support of interethnic tolerance, democracy, economic reform, human rights, the rule of law, Euro-Atlantic integration; and against extremism, propaganda and disinformation, and corruption;

WHEREAS, RFE/RL's Balkan Service was created at the height of the Bosnian War, "to serve as a daily reminder to the peoples of the former Yugoslavia that conflict was not preordained, that they once lived together in peace and could do so again, given the will."

WHEREAS, one of the Service's first programs in 1994, "Bridge," hosted by Omer Karabeg, recently celebrated its 1,000 episode and continues to encourage dialogue and understanding by bringing together people of diverse backgrounds;

WHEREAS, in 1996, the Service commenced production of the weekly 30-minute program "TV Liberty," which continues to appear on more than 30 local TV stations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina;

WHEREAS, in 1998, the Service and its many affiliate partners throughout Bosnia created a jointly produced program, "Radio 27," as a manifestation of this commitment to pan-Bosnian cooperation, and "Radio 27" continues to air today;

WHEREAS, during the 1999 NATO bombing campaign in Serbia, RFE/RL worked with the Voice of America, British Broadcasting Corporation, Deutsche Welle, and Radio France Internationale to assemble joint, 24-hour international program streams for Serbia and for Kosovo;

WHEREAS, according to a poll published by a prominent Belgrade newspaper in July 1999, RFE/RL was the most listened-to international broadcaster during the NATO bombing campaign, and according to a survey conducted by U.S. Agency for Global Media during the October 2000 post-election crisis in Yugoslavia that led to the fall of Slobodan Milosevic, RFE/RL was the most listened-to broadcaster in Serbia – domestic or international – during the crisis;

WHEREAS, the Service expanded in March 1999 to provide content in the Albanian language to Kosovo, in June 2000 to provide content in the Montenegrin language, and in September 2001 to provide content in the Macedonian language;

WHEREAS, since the end of hostilities, the Balkan Service has remained deeply engaged with its audiences throughout the former Yugoslavia, and has reinforced its reputation throughout the region as a platform to break communications barriers, to enable moderate political figures and groups throughout the region to express and reconcile their differences, and to build cooperation among the peoples of the sovereign successor states;

WHEREAS, in Serbia, the Service was the only media to air news of the war-crimes charges filed against Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic, as well as the voices of the survivors of the Srebrenica massacre and siege of Sarajevo;

WHEREAS, the Service's website, slobodnaevropa.org, is one of the most reliable news websites in the region, providing its audiences with up-to-the-minute coverage of current events, using diverse multimedia content – in 2018, the site averaged over 500,000 visits and 870,000 page views per month – and has a devoted following on social platforms, with more than 210,000 followers on Facebook and 30,000 subscribers to its YouTube site;

WHEREAS, in 2018, the Service established digital units in Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia – Balkan countries where Russia actively exerts its influence – to provide an alternative to disinformation, and in Kosovo and Bosnia to address extremism in the region and to provide a platform for engagement and respectful discussion about why people become radicalized and driven to violence, and how the cycle can be stopped; and

WHEREAS, according to RFE/RL Vice President and the Balkan Service's first Director, Nenad Pejic, "The media situation in the Balkans today is in many ways worse than in the time the Balkan Service was established, which is why our presence in the Balkans is even more important today;"

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Board of Governors and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the U.S. Agency for Global Media that we celebrate and commemorate the 25th anniversary of RFE/RL's Balkan Service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board and CEO applaud and thank current and former members of the Balkan Service for their commitment to their audiences and their dedication to professional journalism.