

*Conference of the Parliamentary Committees of EU Member States  
Maintaining Momentum in the EU's Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy  
Dublin, 25 June*

**Rethinking the International Community's Approach**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the organisers of this conference for drawing up an extremely well-planned agenda and bringing together participants whose various roles make it possible to have an informed and productive exchange of ideas.

I think this reflects the character of the Irish Presidency, which has been very businesslike and has at the same time fostered the sort of creative debate that can help resolve longstanding problems, not least those we face together on our continent in our own backyard.

I would also like to express my thanks for being invited to participate. When I was first asked, I pointed out that I am no longer an EU official – and I was assured that an “outside” perspective would be welcome.

At the same time, I don't suppose my perspective is entirely that of an outsider since I'm an ambassador of an EU member state and I served for some time as the EU's Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina in conjunction with my role as the International Community's High Representative.

**A specific mandate**

The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina has a very specific mandate, defined under the Peace Agreement and supported by a series of UN Security Council Resolutions. This mandate includes interpreting and overseeing the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which contains the country's constitution, as well as coordinating the work of international agencies in the country.

While this mandate has not changed, the OHR has stepped back in recent years, including in the use of my civilian executive mandate, to account for the reinforced presence of the European Union. The goal of this reconfiguration of the international community, which was completed some two years ago, is to put integration with the European Union at the heart of the domestic political agenda.

The Head of the EU Delegation and EU Special Representative, Ambassador Peter Sorensen, leads a strengthened mission that reflects the EU's determination to make an effective contribution to Bosnia's recovery.

When we speak about "the push of Dayton and the pull of Brussels" we recognise the key role of EU integration in the country's long road from conflict and division to lasting peace and prosperity through reintegration and reform.

I would like to make use of this forum to express my appreciation for the enormous commitment, skill and persistence that Ambassador Sorensen has brought to the job.

As High Representative, my own perspective is slightly different from the EU, but I firmly believe that our mandates and our roles in the country are complementary. The last few years have unfortunately demonstrated that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a typical candidate country, even when compared with its neighbours. This has to do in part with the country's wartime past, in part with the complicated constitutional set-up, which offers countless opportunities for ethnic vetoes, and in part to the fact that the status quo seems to suit the country's leaders and parties more than a sincere commitment to reform and integration.

### **Enlargement strategy**

For this reason, when we speak about EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- we must speak in terms of a tailored and targeted strategy that circumvents or – best of all – eliminates, unique obstacles created by the country's recent history;
- we must keep in mind that the country's EU path is a strategic objective endorsed by the International Community over alternative objectives – objectives of division and secession; and we must keep in mind that
- Bosnia and Herzegovina's successful integration will yield enormous benefits to the people of Europe: It is, in fact, an EU foreign-policy success waiting to happen.

### **A special case**

Let me quickly address the first point, that this country is a special case.

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina is equipped with a number of modern institutions; it has a stable currency and an overhauled code of civil and criminal

law. In the first half of the last decade it was the fastest-growing economy in Southeast Europe.

But, as you know, we have hit a roadblock. Rather than driving forward on the Euro-Atlantic path, we have instead seen an ongoing attempt to re-open the fundamentals of the Peace Agreement, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

The BiH Parliament has been paralysed by obstruction; and the entity governments are unable to tackle the economic crisis and the spread of unemployment and poverty. Corruption is endemic. Fear is created amongst the population by scaremongering when the reality is that the greatest danger for each ethnic groups comes from the political leaders that claim to represent and defend them.

These negative developments are the result of an unwillingness, or an inability on the part of the political establishment to change its mindset and its approach to politics. Their priority is power and everything that comes with it, how heavy the price is for the people appears to matter very little to them.

Is there an alternative? Yes there is and we don't have to look very far to find it. When High Representative Catherine Ashton secured the landmark Serbia-Kosovo agreement in April, the stakeholders had had to overcome an extraordinary number of political obstacles and they jettisoned an immense amount of historical baggage.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the obstacles are not as great and the baggage is not as heavy.

Which is easier, to solve the Kosovo question or to deliver representative government to Mostar – a medium-sized town with enormous economic potential?

Which is easier, to solve the Kosovo question or to ensure that – as the European Court of Human Rights ruled three years ago – constitutional adjustments are made so that every BiH citizen has the right to run for office?

Clearly, the immediate challenges facing BiH politicians are, relatively speaking, modest.

The same goes for registering ownership of military property, the only task that still has to be completed before Bosnia and Herzegovina can begin participating in NATO's Membership Action Plan.

The BiH challenges are easier to overcome – but BiH leaders have resolutely demonstrated that they do not *want* to overcome them.

Failure has not happened by accident. It has happened by design.

This is a country whose people want to join the European Union but whose leaders are much more ambivalent.

And that's what makes it a special case.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the views of the people and the views of the leadership have diverged.

A successful enlargement policy has to take this divergence into account.

### **Rethinking our engagement**

This brings me to my second point. How do we carry forward, in partnership with the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the strategic objective that we have endorsed over alternative objectives?

I emphasise the point about alternatives because policy and practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina is now inextricably linked to the European perspective, laid out at the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003 and constantly reaffirmed by senior EU officials in the years since.

Rethinking our engagement – whether we are speaking about the International Community as a whole or the European Union in particular – does not mean rethinking whether or not we should *have* an engagement.

The International Community – and in recent years the European Union has assumed a leading role – has made a commitment to four million Europeans. We are currently experiencing serious difficulties in fulfilling that commitment, but this does not mean we can reconsider the commitment.

It means we must focus on solving the difficulties.

In this respect I very much welcome the perceptive and frank remarks delivered by Commissioner Stefan Fuele to the European Parliament at the session on Bosnia and Herzegovina on 22 May. Commissioner Fuele made it clear that we need to recalibrate our approach – and this view was eloquently supported by Irish Minister of State for European Affairs Lucinda Creighton.

The question is: what sort of recalibration should we be looking at?

The answer to this question (or at least part of the answer) may emerge from what could be viewed as a fundamental change in the political situation on the ground.

In recent weeks, thousands of citizens have come out onto the streets of Bosnia and Herzegovina to express their anger at the absence of competent, honest or effective government.

The thousands who came out onto the streets two weeks ago and who may very well come out onto the streets again in the weeks to come were predominantly young and forward-looking – the very people who have grasped and embraced the fundamental European values of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness.

I believe that part of the recalibration of the International Community's approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina might usefully include a broadening of the dialogue, which until now has been very substantially with political leaders rather than with their constituents.

It also requires that issues are brought to vote before institutions in a far more speedy manner and we identify which political leaders and institutions are part of the solution and which of them are the problem.

We should then factor this fully into our approach and bring to an end an approach that has allowed obstructionists to maintain the perception that they are part of the solution and partners of the International Community.

I ask myself the question, can somebody who repeatedly advocates policies that go against European values be a partner for the EU?

### **A foreign-policy success**

The EU's breakthrough in the Serbia-Kosovo dispute has rightly been attributed to the decisive political engagement of High Representative Ashton.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina today, I also believe that success can be achieved only through a creative and stronger political engagement, with clear conditions and benefits explicitly based on European values – the values that are fully understood by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina if not yet fully understood by their leaders.

What is abundantly clear to me, after four years in the job, is that Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot integrate into the EU if mainstream politicians inside the country are seeking to drive it toward disintegration. This is a fundamental point on which we must take a stronger stand.

We will have the greatest success if we, the international community, return to our core values and instil a sense of vision into our mission. Combined with making the best use of the tools at our disposal, including the executive mandates and united in our messages to the leaders and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we will again be well placed to leverage positive change in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When rethinking our strategy, we should consider a number of tools for pushing change more forcefully, while still maintaining the central role of the institutions of the European Union in the country. These might include some or all of the following:

- Linking financial assistance policies more closely to political progress;
- Confronting more directly political parties and actors who block or undermine reforms and who promote division;
- Preventing a roll-back of previous actions by reaffirming the role of the OHR and EUFOR in maintaining the progress achieved in the post-Dayton period;

And there are certainly other ideas, which should be on the table.

Such a renewed engagement would champion European values as the basis for a viable foreign policy and could bring four million European citizens into the common home where they belong, replacing a potential problem on the EU's borders with an enormous social, political and economic asset.

Thank you