
Address to the Permanent Council of the OSCE

by the

**Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina
H.E. Mr. Mladen Ivanic**

Thursday, 21st April, 2005

Mr. Chairman,
Secretary General,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to have this opportunity to speak to this distinguished organisation about current developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and our prospects and plans for the forthcoming period.

At the outset, let me express our appreciation for the commitment, ambition and insight which Slovenia, as the new Chairmanship-in-Office brings to this important job, building on the successful Bulgarian chairmanship. We certainly look forward to working with you in order to uphold our shared principles and values in practical ways.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like now to provide an update on BiH's progress towards NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Programme negotiations with the EU on Stabilization and Association Agreement. Both processes are of critical importance for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Indeed, the reforms being undertaken by the country towards that are immense, both in terms of quantity and scope.

It is my pleasure to say that a great deal of progress has already been made on both fronts:

- significant advances were made over the past year in addressing the priorities in the Feasibility Study;
- BiH has completed significant reforms such as customs, taxation and judicial reform, and will proceed with other wide-ranging reforms including strengthening the State-level institutions;
- cooperation with the ICTY has been significantly improved;
- strengthening of BiH's fiscal sustainability is on the way
- police reform is under way, and we hope to achieve a model which will result in operational effectiveness and which, at the same time, will not threaten the existence of the Bosnia and Herzegovina's entities, as it is guaranteed by the Dayton-Paris Accords;
- defense reform is on target with existing timeframes for BiH to join PfP this year and there is no technical reason that would hinder such membership.

- Membership of BiH in PfP and opening of negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU will strengthen peace and stability in the region. The reform of the defence sector has already resulted with the establishment of professional State-level Ministry of Defense, a joint command for the country's armed forces and significant reductions in the overall size of the military effectives. I would like to mention some successful results of 2004 defense reform here: State defense budget has been adopted for the second year, demobilization has been finalized. Reserves decreased from 240 000 to 60 000 and the number of military personal decreased from 50.000 to 12.000.

Within UNDP project of reduction of the small and light weapons (SALW) in 2004, and with significant assistance from the OSCE, 20.000 peaces of SALW were destroyed.

In this way Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the first country in the region that introduced moratorium on SALW export, gives contribution to safety and stability in region and removes a risk that sold weapons could finally end in possession of international terrorist groups.

Moving towards the Stabilization and Association Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made significant achievements in establishing new institutions, training staff, budgetary planning and financial funding on a longer-term basis.

However, in today's world of growing globalization security threats and concerns arise in different forms and much faster than before. We recognize that security and well being of the region are increasingly intertwined and we need to work more effectively together on issues of common concern.

Mr. Chairman,

As the beneficiary of one of the oldest and largest OSCE field missions, we are resolute advocates for the OSCE and its work in advancing democracy, peace and justice in OSCE participating states.

Recent European history as well as the new threats to the security and stability in 21st century in Europe push all participating states to think and to find best solutions in reorganisation of this valuable institution. The current debate on transforming the OSCE can not leave any state idle. A security architecture that was built around "containment" and facing the threat of inter-state conflict had to be re-designed to face threats arising from intra-state conflict and threats from non-state actors. The OSCE stood up to the challenge. Transformation from the Helsinki process into more of an organisation was not reflected in the change of the name only. The OSCE is instrumental in conflict prevention, fostering the growth of civil society and improving bilateral and regional co-operation.

With its combination of a unique forum for multilateral discussion and negotiation with highly operational field activities OSCE is playing an increasingly important role in pan European security.

The current debate on transforming the OSCE needs to address a number of fundamental questions starting from the new transformed role of NATO and the manifestation of the EU's Common Foreign and Security policy in the OSCE area to resolving the 'frozen conflict'. The OSCE should be re-vitalized in all its three dimensions, while maintaining its characteristic as a forum for dialogue among equals.

Moreover, specific attention should be paid to a review of OSCE's role vis-à-vis other key security organizations in Europe (EU, NATO and CoE, as well as the UN) and how to achieve a more effective division of labour, while retaining OSCE's distinct and specific advantages and added value.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me now turn to the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Being involved in many activities and reform processes that are currently under way, with a wide field presence and engagement by significant domestic personal, it is an organisation that is well positioned to provide assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina in ensuring the execution of full democratic control as the OHR changes its role.

OSCE mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a post conflict one. Ten years after signing of the Dayton-Paris Accords, politico-military dimension is important, but less and less significant. I already mentioned bright results in the defense reform and efforts in approaching toward PfP which are reasons for that. Economic and human rights dimension of security are more and more dominant. Economic situation, rule of law, human rights, and education are some of the key factors for sustainable and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that sense future of the OSCE engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with other international organization, should be directed toward reaching similar results as in politico-military dimension.

OSCE offers good assistance through the provision of expertise and support without imposition. The OSCE engagement adds value to the joint efforts of the authorities of the Bosnia and Herzegovina and international institutions in the process of strengthening domestic institutions.

Mr. Chairman,

At the end, allow me to express our appreciation to all countries that supported our endeavor to catch up with the reforms in a region. You can count on Bosnia and Herzegovina as a reliable partner. We will strengthen our cooperation where possible and look forward to our successful inclusion into Euro-Atlantic structure.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to address this session today. I offer my best wishes and support to you and your team in your Chairmanship. We look forward to working closely with you in our way toward towards more stable, democratic and prosperous region.

Thank you for your attention.