



Address at the Clingendael Institute

The Hague, April 14, 2006

***BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TEN YEARS AFTER DAYTON – ON ITS' WAY
TOWARDS BRUSELS***

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first express my gratitude for having this opportunity to address you here, on this prominent *Clingendael Institute*, attended by many diplomats from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Looking from our BH perspective, The Hague has a very special meaning since it is the residence of the ICTY and the International Court of Justice.

The role of these two international judiciary institutions is indispensable in finding the truth on the nature of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and reaching justice. Only on the basis of truth and justice we can build confidence between the citizens, peoples and states in the region, as well as a better future for the generations to come.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the government and people of Kingdom of Nederland for providing a significant aid during the post-war reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to 324 million USD of bilateral financial support and its' participation in the EU support to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nederland was for sure one of the most significant donors for reconstruction of my country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ten years have passed after ending the BH war and signing the Dayton Peace Accords. Bosnia and Herzegovina has gone a very long way since then. A totally war-destroyed country has turned to a country, which has started the SAA negotiations with the EU a few months ago. Doing so, Bosnia and Herzegovina is surely moving towards the EU and NATO membership.

Bosnia and Herzegovina Ten Years Ago, Just After Signing the Dayton Peace Accords

The cities, settlements, economy, infrastructure and communications were fully or significantly destroyed. Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided along the war, entities or some other lines of divisions. There were three clashing and well-armed armies containing about 500 thousand soldiers, plus 60 thousand international forces members on the ground. Three big police forces far way from the professional and democratic standards.

The state borders were unprotected and the freedom of movement limited. Any crossing over the entities' lines was treated as an act of courage.

The legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina was also divided and more connected to the neighboring states rather than within the country. Our neighbors were intensively interfering into the internal matters of BH.

More than 2,2 million (more than a half of the entire population) were expelled from their pre-war homes or became refugees. Their property was destroyed or occupied and it was not possible even to think about returning. Those who did dare to return exposed their life and health to the danger.

All war criminals were at large and the co-operation of many institutions (RS entity and the so called Herzeg-Bosnia) with the ICTY almost did not exist. More than 27 thousand people are treated as missing persons.

The economic and social situation was very difficult due to the hundreds of thousands of pensioners, war invalids, fallen soldiers families and war veterans, who did not receive any compensation. It was extremely rare that employed people received any salary and the pension funds were empty.

The state institutions almost did not exist and even those who were established did not function. At the same time, the entities and other para-institutions were acting as states within the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina Today, Ten Years After

Today, ten years after, Bosnia and Herzegovina is not questionable as the state and there are no political forces in or outside of the country that could jeopardize its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Additional competences and many state-level institutions have been introduced.

A significant progress with respect to the expelled persons and refugees return has been achieved. According to the UNHCR figures, over a million of them (about 50%) have returned to their pre-war homes. The property deliberately taken away is almost returned to the owners, but mostly destroyed. Freedom of movement has been provided, including the safety to the returnees. Yet, the returnees have many other problems to resolve, starting from the lack of jobs, health care, education, pensions etc.

With the return of the expelled people and refugees, the multi-ethnic structure will be re-established, which is, at the same time, strengthening the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Macro-economic stability has been provided. Inflation is on the EU level, and we have the strongest currency in the region. Comparing to the post-war period, GDP has been tripled and the foreign currency reserves are increased for 15 times reaching 2, 2 billion EURO in 2005. We are regularly paying off the foreign debt, which makes 2, 1 billion EURO (about 20% of the GDP). The banking system also has been consolidated. Industrial production and foreign investments are constantly increasing, as well as the public income.

Bosnia and Herzegovina on the European Road

Starting the SAA negotiations with European Union is the most important political event in our country after signing The Dayton Peace Accords ten years ago. That marks the definite transition of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Dayton to the Brussels phase.

Prior to this event, we have had to carry out many of extremely difficult and complex reforms. I would mention just some of them here: the taxes and fiscal system, establishment and development of the State Border Service, a single intelligence agency, introduction of VAT, the public broadcast service reform, judiciary system reform, etc.

We are also carrying out the defense system reform. Instead of three mono-ethnic clashing armies, today we have a single, multi-ethnic army. The entities have not any responsibility in this respect, but the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina has professional, single multiethnic Military Forces in compliance with the NATO standards. The BH army today contains 12 thousand soldiers.

Only ten years ago, the whole world was sending troops to my country helping us to build peace and stability. Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina is sending its troops to participate in the international peacekeeping missions. Our soldiers and policemen today are in Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone and a few other crisis regions.

This reform and harmonization of our military forces according to NATO standards is going on very well. Bosnia and Herzegovina has a real chance to join the group of states, which will become the full NATO members in 2008.

Entering the EU and NATO is the main priority of our foreign policy.

That is, at the same time, the best way to set up lasting peace and stability not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but in the entire region of South-Eastern Europe.

We hope to be able to end the negotiations and sign the SAA by the end of this year.

We are completely aware that meeting the requirements to enter the EU is absolutely for the best interest of our country and citizens in order to be able to provide for a prosperous future for our children and generations to come.

Therefore we do support the EU insisting on fully meeting its requirements not only in respect to Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also to the other states candidates. This particularly refers to the requirement for full and unconditional cooperation with the ICTY, which means the apprehension of the suspected war criminals who are still at large.

I hereby mean Karadžić and Mladić above all who are, along with Slobodan Milošević, the personification of the crime and suffering throughout our region.

Apprehension of Karadžić and Mladić to the ICTY would finally close the war pages of our history. That would enable hundreds of thousands of their direct and indirect victims to finally find their peace and devote themselves to a normal life. Besides, this apprehension would certainly release a new amount of positive energy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and also in the entire region.

Attitude towards the war crimes and war criminals is the most important issue, not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina, but in the whole region as well. It is not enough to arrest Karadžić, Mladić and the others wanted by the ICTY only! It is necessary to persecute several hundreds (even thousands maybe!) of other war criminals. It is unacceptable in today's Europe and anywhere in the world to treat war criminals as national heroes and to justify war crimes as alleged ethnic interests' protection! There is no excuse for war crimes!

The fact is that the awareness of the war crimes and attitude towards war criminals are gradually being changed. Beside the ICTY, we now have the domestic courts, who deal with war crimes. The BH Court has been established and its' task is to take over some of the cases from the ICTY and persecute the most responsible persons for war crimes

More than 400 mass graves are found so far and about 12 thousand missing persons being found in them.

The process of meeting EU and NATO requirements could go on even faster. The problem is, however, in the current constitutional system. Bosnia and Herzegovina today has a non-functional and expensive political system, a weak state and strong entities.

After several months of intensive negotiations, the most influential political parties have recently achieved the agreement on modalities of the first phase of constitutional reforms. These reforms will provide for a stronger state and more functional institutions. That will enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet all the requirements coming out from its European road.

We expect that the Parliament will pass these constitutional amendments by the end of this month. The biggest value of this agreement is the fact that it was produced by the domestic politicians, with any international pressure as it used to be case sometimes before. We also agreed that this will be the first phase, and the second one will come after the elections.

Relations with the Neighbors and Bosnia and Herzegovina in Region

I would now like to say something on our relations with the neighbors and the situation in the South-Eastern Europe region.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has fully understood the message from Brussels that the regional cooperation is the key for the institutionalization of the region's relations with the EU. In that respect, we do support the idea of establishing of a free trade zone of the Western Balkans region.

Ten years after ending the war, we have mostly normalized our relations with both of our neighboring countries. Unfortunately, we still have not managed to sign and verify all necessary bilateral agreement (borders, real estate and legal relations etc.).

We have full diplomatic relations with both of the countries and the citizens of our countries can cross the borders of BH, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro with their ID only.

As you can see, a lot has been done. Along with the further regulation of these relations, I think it is necessary to intensify our efforts on improvement of the infrastructural connection between our countries.

On this occasion, I would also mention the two opened issues in our region: the forthcoming referendum in Montenegro and the Kosovo status resolution.

As far as the Montenegro referendum is concerned, I am sure that both sides will fully respect the EU regulations so there will be no problems, no matter what the result can be.

The Kosovo issue is much more complex and we should have a more careful approach to that. BH position is that it should be resolved within a compromise through a dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

However, we strongly reject any attempt to bring the Kosovo issue into any connection with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Any attempt like this would directly jeopardize peace and stability of the entire region and could have negative consequences.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Equality, tolerance and respect for the diversities are the foundations of the modern democratic world and the values the EU has been laid on. It is also the century's long tradition of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the place where four big monotheistic religions met each other, bringing to my country and its citizens all the luxury of their cultures and traditions as to one of the rare European multi-ethnic societies.

In almost each BH town, the Catholic and Orthodox churches, mosques, even synagogues were standing together, side by side. Our people are used to live together in peace and tolerance and the war in my country used to be the product of the world or regional wars and interventions from the neighboring states. That was exactly the case in the 1992-1995 war.

We are therefore very proud of our diversities and our multi-ethnic structure, treating them as our biggest treasure and advantage. The unity of diversities, as a constant process, is part of everyday life in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Just due to that fact, BH is one of the few countries having good relations with EU and USA, but also with China, Russia and the Islamic world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a vision of the modern united Europe founded on the equal possibilities for all its citizens is winning, disregarding the problems we are facing. That is the only future, not for BH alone, but for the entire continent.

Only then Europe will definitely become an oasis of peace, stability and prosperity, where all its inhabitants, regardless of their ethnicity, race, religion or culture, will feel at home and will be proud of the European unity of diversities.

The positive processes in BH and region I have spoken about also came as a result of the commitment of BH and the other countries in the region for such an idea of Europe.

The European Union should not miss the chance for realization of such a vision of our continent. For that reason, the historic process of the EU enlargement should be continued, disregarding some difficulties and complexity of the internal situation in some of the member states.

We must not forget that it was precisely the establishment of lasting peace and stability in the then destructed and divided Europe that was the main idea which led the founders of what we today call the European Union. The history of European integration so far has proved that these visionaries were right.

Today, half a century later, EU and its members have the possibility to provide a lasting peace, stability and prosperity in our continent throughout the continuation of EU enlargement.

I am convinced that the Kingdom of Netherlands will also, as being one of the founders of the EU, support this historic act.

Thank you.