

[Extract]

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[...]

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mr. Ambassador Ricardo Alberto Arias

Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin by welcoming Mr. Nikola Špirić and thanking him for his statement this morning with regard to the work, commitment and responsibilities of his Government. My delegation is pleased also to welcome the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Christian Schwarz-Schilling, and to thank him for the work he has done in carrying out his tremendous task, which deserves acknowledgment. The best witness to his work is the fact that, more than 10 years after the war and its scars, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains under the same Government without further outbreaks of violence.

However, much remains to be done. The current political stagnation in Bosnia jeopardizes the progress made in consolidating the achievements of the last 12 years.

The absence of progress in the areas of the constitution and the police and the insufficient cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), among other things, have paralysed Bosnia and set the stage for regression. Without ethnic and political consensus in Bosnia, the viability of the country is called into question. Thus, the main goal of the

Dayton Accords — to consolidate peace in a multi-ethnic Bosnia — seems to be disappearing over the horizon.

The year 2006 was not a good one for Bosnia. Ethnic and nationalist policies have slowed and jeopardized the reform process that was leading the country towards European integration. The leaders of each ethnic group making up the population of the country have the primary obligation to reform institutions and enter into political agreements that go beyond their pre-war nationalist goals.

The decisions to be taken by Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders are difficult, which is not surprising in view of the tragic background that led to the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. We reaffirm the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and urge its political leaders to cooperate among themselves and with the High Representative in order to resume the institutional reform process.

Although the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the hands of its citizens, it also requires greater leadership, courage and vision on the part of its leaders than has been seen recently. Yet progress in the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina requires the active participation of the international community. Today more than ever, we all have a responsibility to guide Bosnia and Herzegovina towards a liberal democracy and a free-market economy. Through the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, we reiterate our support and urge the parties to take the difficult political decisions necessary for the country if it is to progress.

Likewise, the European Union needs to increase its commitment to Bosnia if it expects the country to meet the obligations that will set it on the road to Brussels. The European Union should ensure that the responsibilities it has assumed in Bosnia continue to be a priority to its members, and that it fulfils that obligation in an energetic and broad-based manner. Only this will ease the political transition of the Balkans to greater understanding and stability. The success or failure of efforts in Bosnia is very closely linked to other similar situations in the region.