

MC.DEL/29/07  
29 November 2007

ENGLISH only

**STATEMENT BY  
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**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF  
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL  
MADRID, 29 - 30 November 2007**

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to begin by offering the Spanish colleagues and particularly Minister Moratinos our sincere congratulations on their capable Chairmanship and express our gratitude for an excellent, recognizable and traditional Spanish hospitality.

Bosnia and Herzegovina fully associates itself with the statement made by Minister Luis Amado on behalf of the European Union.

Old Latin proverb teaches us that *Words fly away, the written letter remains - Verba volant, littera scripta manet*. I am positive that we are able to leave valuable written letters from this meeting and the issues we discuss here.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has already left valuable written contributions and practical implementation of our commitments and obligation for the benefits and well-being of next generations to come.

OSCE has been helping in building secure and more prosperous world in our countries built on mutual understanding, open dialog and openness. We in Bosnia and Herzegovina can vouch for that.

I would like to say few words about the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina which has been and still is a most valuable partner in a number of key areas – education, elections, security sector reform, capacity-building, democracy, to name just a few.

Security and stability, as we all know, are prerequisites for unfettered internal development and a precondition for good neighbourly relations and constructive regional cooperation.

In this context, Bosnia and Herzegovina strives to provide a meaningful contribution to the regional security and stability by strictly adhering to and implementing its commitments under the OSCE instruments, including the Open Skies Treaty and the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control, also known as the Florence Agreement.

This contribution to improved regional security has been made possible by significant internal developments and open and frank dialogue among state parties namely Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Several mutually reinforcing reform developments have been taking place in parallel in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of the most important being the ongoing security sector reform involving both defense structures, civilian security agencies, and parliamentary oversight.

This security reform process has been launched with a view to putting in place such State-level structures that will be able to efficiently tackle and eliminate all threats posed by illegal activities by non-State actors including criminal groups, as well as to ensure that

Bosnia and Herzegovina is able to assume and fulfill its responsibilities under international legal instruments as a reliable partner and member of the international community of democratic nations upholding and further strengthening the international legal order and rule of law.

Building democracy from the ground up is a daunting task, and the OSCE Mission has provided a valuable assistance in that regard. In addition to fully functioning and transparent State-level democratic institutions, democracy also heavily relies on the active participation of and input provided by the civil society and citizenry with solid understanding of the principles of democracy.

Mr. Chairman,

We are aware of the need to further empower under-represented groups of people in politics and public life, especially youth and women. This empowerment forms part of a larger effort of domestic authorities to address the potential sources of instability and misunderstandings, including in the education sector.

Education is a public service that touches virtually every household which makes education reform a subject of great concern to the whole country, and to each and every citizen. The current educational system, divided along ethnic lines, has been identified as a large barrier to the further progress of the country and a potential source of misunderstandings with serious repercussions in the future. We do not want the classroom to be misused and to serve as a means of perpetuating prejudices. We do not want the schools to contribute to the growing divide in the country. We want schools that will educate the youngsters to be tolerant, responsible and open-minded citizens of the world.

Problems with the school curriculums and textbooks for so-called national group of subjects need to be tackled immediately in order that biased interpretation of recent history is finally out of our classrooms.

We therefore welcome the efforts and assistance provided by the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the domestic authorities to set up an educational system that will meet the highest educational standards implemented in advanced democracies.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina is the largest international civilian organisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the most extensive field presence. The continued success of its activities will depend to the largest extent on the approval of the same budget level for the coming year to enable the Mission to continue implementing existing projects. Further more bearing in mind the growing importance of environmental security, the need to cope with global and regional environmental threats, we would also like to see the OSCE Mission expands the scope of its activities by addressing pressing environmental concerns in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As was recently stated at a hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission), for democracy to flourish, there is need to exist a set of functioning democratic institutions.

The current, long-standing disfunctionality of State institutions only impedes further democratic progress. However, the mere existence of the institutions does not suffice. Equally important in this regard is the existence of democratic decision-making processes that enable those institutions to function smoothly.

By the time Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a formally recognized candidate for full EU membership, the democratic foundations laid with the help of the OSCE Mission will have become so solid, and democratic values so deeply-rooted in our society, that the Mission's presence will no longer be required, or, at least, not required to the extent that we have needed it to date.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me one observation. Very often it has been said that the OSCE field missions are jewel in a crown. As a Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country with the one of the largest OSCE missions I could not agree more. Also for me the real treasure of the OSCE is open dialogue among participating states and the OSCE institutions and structures. I hope that we are ready and capable to preserve this Organization as a real forum for open and useful discussions. We shall need it in a future.

Last but not least we welcome the Finnish Chairmanship and offer it full support of the Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thank you for your attention.