

Foreign Press Office - Mostar

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10.7.2005

Washington DC: BiH delegation at annual session of OSCE parliamentary assembly

FENA

July 4, 2005

A delegation of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly comprising House of Peoples Speaker Velimir Jukic, as well as Seada Palavric and Bosko Siljegovic is participating in 14th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Washington, which is taking place from July 1 to 5, was announced by the BiH Parliamentary Assembly.

The plenary session was addressed by the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Dennis Hastert, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Slovenian Foreign Minister Dmitrij Rupel.

They accented the great role of parliaments, parliamentarians and the OSCE in development of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and security in the OSCE participating states.

About 300 parliamentarians from 55 participating states resumed debate in the committees on political and economic matters and human rights on the subject of the session: "Thirty years since Helsinki: challenges ahead".

The Conference focuses on the problems of human trafficking, combating terrorism, corruption, anti-Semitism, and the matters regarding gender equality and observing elections.

During their stay in the United States, the BiH delegation had several meetings with the other delegations, and on the last day of the session, they are planned to meet with U.S. Congressman Michael Turner.

Radovanovic: Entity defense ministries likely abolished this year

Nezavisne Novine

July 3, 2005

BiH Defense Minister Nikola Radovanovic has said the entity defense ministries will likely be abolished at the end of this year.

In an interview published in the Banja Luka daily Nezavisne novine on Sunday (July 3), Radovanovic said that if the entity parliaments back the recommendations of the BiH Defense Reform Commission, the most logical

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timeframe for closing the two entities' ministries would be the end of December, as the current accounting year ends then. (Excerpt)

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EU enlargement must continue, Balkan coordinator says for Slovene agency

STA news agency, Ljubljana

July 4, 2005

Brussels - EU enlargement must continue despite the crisis. This is especially true of enlargement to the Balkans, for which there is no alternative, Erhard Busek, the coordinator of the Stability Pact for SE Europe, said in an interview for STA ahead of Tuesday's [5 July] meeting with FM Dimitrij Rupel.

Although some politicians see enlargement as the scapegoat for the negative outcome of the referendums on the EU's constitution, the reasons for the double "no" lie elsewhere, said Busek, adding that he expects the support of all main EU institutions for continuation of enlargement onto SE Europe.

According to him, the Balkan countries should see the crisis as motivation to act more quickly. "My message is: carry out the transformation, take over the acquis, for if the conditions are fulfilled, there can be no more arguments against."

The aspirants can count on the support of EU newcomers, which endorse the continuation of the integration process, among other things to further their specific interests, which is especially true of Slovenia.

Slovene companies and the government are strongly connected with the region. This is logical, for these are old markets and they know the region well, which can be an advantage, he noted.

In the new circumstances it is crucial to dispel fears about enlargement. For Busek, the magic formula is "precise information". This is not the case now and politicians often fail to portray the facts correctly.

For him, what makes most sense now is to wait for the dust to settle down. "Realistically, little has changed... Now everyone is commenting and saying that action needs to be taken. Yet sometimes it is better to reconsider before commenting, which applies to all member states and the European Commission."

Busek noted that most countries in the region have made progress, notably Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Serbia. Yet some problems are very specific (Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and nothing will change until the international community makes a decision.

But first the responsibility for Bosnia and Kosovo needs to be transferred to European institutions. "This is what the Americans want and I agree with it. Although I don't believe in dates elsewhere, they should be set here," Busek said, adding that the second phase would be to transfer powers to domestic authorities.

Any solution for Kosovo will have to be acceptable for Pristina as well as Belgrade, he said. Busek was reluctant to disclose his proposal, but said the international community must finally start using clear language.

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He also thinks a start of accession talks with Croatia would be a good signal for the entire region, but this depends on whether Croatia will succeed in sending General Ante Gotovina to The Hague. "I would be very glad if talks started soon, as we need a signal for the region."

Busek shares Slovenia's view that it would be easier for Slovenia and Croatia to resolve bilateral issues in such a new context. "This is a good approach which has to work. The two sides know the problems and they should resolve them one by one, which is feasible."

Ney: Issue of police reform needs to be resolved by mid September

FENA

July 4, 2005

Senior Deputy High Representative Martin Ney warned in Banja Luka on Monday that the issue of police reform needs to be resolved by mid September if BiH wishes to "cross the bar" on the road towards Europe, and that it is important to reopen talks on police reform.

He said after talks with RS Prime Minister Pero Bukejlovic that the issue now is whether authorities in Banja Luka wish to reopen talks and accept the three European principles for police reform, and stressed that the final position on police reform cannot be that provided by the RS.

Ney expressed hope that the "RS will not accept the responsibility for preventing future generations in BiH not become a part of the EU". He stressed that the Government and National Assembly need to take certain steps to put BiH in the road towards the EU.

Ney stressed that significant progress has been made on the issue of PBS reform, which is the second conditions for opening talks on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. He added that talks on police reform now need to be reopened because Europe is very impatient in terms of reforms, especially as the 10th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement is moving closer.

The Senior High Representative reiterated that the budgets of future police forces need to be exclusively under state authorities, that police regions need to be organised based on police rules and that the police needs to be protected from the influence of politics.

He said that the RS needs to respects all demands of the Hague Tribunal in terms of indicted war criminals, and that he would discuss this issue with RS officials.

"It is important that the Hague Tribunal and the BiH Human Rights Chamber deal with all atrocities committed

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in the past. The primary responsibility of this country is to face with the past”, Ney said and added that “truth needs to be faced without pointed fingers”, and that facing the truth is a precondition for reconciliation and concerns all parties in BiH. (Excerpt)

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Bosnian state prosecution reportedly has new leads on mujahedin war crimes

BHTV1, Sarajevo

July 4, 2005 17:00 GMT

[Presenter] The Bosnia-Herzegovina prosecution has obtained important leads on war crimes committed by members of the Al-Mujahid Unit in central Bosnia. Apart from the Maktouf [recently sentenced to five years in prison for war crimes] case, the local judiciary has to date not tried a single other case of war crimes committed by foreign volunteers, who fought on all three sides in the Bosnia-Herzegovina war. Neither are precise figures for foreigners who participated in the war available. Analysts agree that most volunteers had come here out of a sense of adventure or for criminal motives.

[Reporter Boris Grubestic] The investigation in the case against Abduladhim Maktouf for participation in war crimes against Serb and Croat civilians at the mujahedin camp in Orasac near Travnik has yielded significant leads for the state prosecution for further trials concerning war crimes committed by foreign volunteers.

[Jonathan Schmidt, international prosecutor with the Bosnian state court, in English with superimposed translation into vernacular] We have obtained new leads and created a good basis for further war crime trials in central Bosnia, and not only for the events of October 1993, but for that entire year. The good thing is that we have learned a lot about the Al- Mujahid Unit.

[Reporter] An Al-Qai'da terrorist found to have held Bosnia-Herzegovina citizenship has been killed in Saudi Arabia [reference to Muhammad Ibrahim Al-Hayari]. Volunteers from Serbia, as well as Russian citizens, participated in the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict on the side of the Serbs. Foreign volunteers have also been registered on the side of Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[Muhamed Dzemic of the Bosnian branch of Helsinki Committee for Human Rights] When it comes to the so-called volunteers - where everyone uses "volunteer" as a term of endearment - the government, and in the first place the entity governments, are not prepared to deal with their volunteers, to bring them to justice in order to remove collective responsibility from the shoulders of one or the other, or yet another people.

[Reporter] A large number of the volunteers were criminals who were on the run from the law and who, owing to the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, managed to acquire citizenship.

[Reporter] Examining the role of volunteers in the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict, the Greek authorities have recently decided to conduct an investigation into the possible involvement of Greek nationals in the Srebrenica massacre. (Excerpt)