Chairman’s Conclusions – Washington D.C., 10 November 1998

Contact Group

Chairman’s Conclusions

The Contact Group met to gauge progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the post-election period and to discuss priorities for the upcoming Peace Implementation Council Ministerial meeting December 15-16 in Madrid and for the coming years ahead.

The Contact Group reviewed the status of the formation of governments and parliamentary bodies in Bosnia at the national and entity levels, welcomed the work of the High Representative to facilitate agreements and encouraged him to continue playing an active role in this process. The group reiterated the expectation that all office holders will work towards full implementation of the Dayton peace agreement and in support of a united and multi-ethnic Bosnia. This is the only basis on which they can expect support from the international community.

The Contact Group noted that the political evolution in Bosnia has opened up new possibilities with regard to the development and improved effectiveness of the central institutions. It endorsed a specific proposal of the High Representative which provides for a longer rotation or the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, staggered to ensure that no single ethnic group will occupy both the Chair of the Council and the Chair of the Joint Presidency at the same time, and for the establishment of additional Ministries.

The Contact Group welcomed a report by the European Commission on the informal mini-donors’ meeting held November 4-5 in Brussels. While reaffirming their commitment to devote resources to peace implementation in Bosnia, Contact Group members noted the importance of beginning a process of the gradual reduction of international assistance, taking into account the need to address requirements in those areas which have not benefited fully from such assistance.

The Group also affirmed the need for Bosnia to take greater steps in the transition to a sustainable market economy. In this regard, it will be important for Bosnia and the international community to focus on private sector development, including an efficient, transparent, and apolitical privatization process; on the establishment of a modern and efficient payments system, and on the proper functioning of capital markets and banking institutions.

The Contact Group noted three risk factors that must be addressed: the lack of inter-ethnic integration, the need to fully delineate state and entity responsibilities, and the existence of political party strangleholds over the means of production.

The Contact Croup agreed to recommend to the PIC Steering Board five priority areas for the PIC Ministerial and for subsequent focus in the years ahead.

- Accelerating the transition to a sustainable market economy;
- Increasing the momentum on the return of refugees and displaced persons, especially to minority areas;
- Providing a secure environment through the rule of law, including significant progress on judicial reform and further establishment of multi-ethnic police;
- Developing and reinforcing the central institutions, including adoption of a permanent election law; and
- Pressing ahead with media reform and education issues.

The Contact Croup remains gravely concerned about the frequency of violent incidents in parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, related to refugee return and to general criminality, and calls on all parties in Bosnia to act in accordance with the rule of law and with the peace agreement.

The Contact Group reemphasized the importance of the establishment of normal and legitimate relations by Bosnia and Herzegovina’s neighbors, and of clearly demarcated international borders. In this regard, the Croup expects full implementation of Dayton by all of its signatories.

Office of the High Representative