

Transcript of the press conference following Peace Implementation Council Steering Board meeting



Miroslav Lajčák, outgoing High Representative and EU Special Representative:

Good afternoon and thank you for coming today. Yesterday and today I chaired the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board meeting for the last time in my capacity as High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and this press conference is the last time that I will address you acting in this capacity. Today we have with us Mr. Valentin Inzko, who is now assuming the post of High Representative and EU Special Representative. I think that it is very fortunate for Bosnia and Herzegovina that my successor is a man who knows this country, its people, and its language extremely well and who has great enthusiasm and affinity towards Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As regards the Peace Implementation Council meeting, it is necessary to emphasize that we unanimously adopted the Communiqué, which is quite extensive and which contains the explicit positions adopted by the international community and the Peace Implementation Council on all of the current

problems Bosnia and Herzegovina faces today. The Communiqué is being translated right at this moment and that it will be posted on our website quite soon. Therefore, I do not wish to go into detail, except to say that I was, of course, satisfied by the atmosphere that prevailed at the meeting and the fact that there were practically no disagreements regarding the content of the Communiqué.

There are two things that I would like to emphasize. First of all, our meeting last night with the six political leaders and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, which lasted twice as long as planned, proved that the only way for Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward is through agreement and compromise, which was also made clear by the Peace Implementation Council representatives. However, it is just as important that it is evident that an increasing number of political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina realize that no alternative to agreement and compromise exists. That is why in the Communiqué we clearly, explicitly, supported the principle of agreement and compromise, which began with the meetings of the six political leaders in Mostar in August of last year and which today continues in the form of the Prud Agreement and the Prud Process. We expressed our wish for this process to be expanded and to include representatives of other political parties.

The second point I would like to make is that, of course, the priority of the Office of the High Representative, myself, and Mr. Inzko, is, above all else, the fulfillment of the five objectives and two conditions set by the PIC. We adopted those ambitious and broad objectives and conditions 13 months ago, in February last year. In 13 months a great deal has been accomplished, we have adopted three laws related to the rule of law, two extremely important decisions related to the financial self-sustainability of the country were rendered and an agreement on movable defense property was reached, and also, yesterday and today, the Parliament of Bosnia and

Herzegovina, as a result of a historic vote, adopted the constitutional amendments on the status of Brčko District. Therefore, this serves as proof of how much can be accomplished when we have clearly defined aims.

Also, it is clear that we still have work to do. The most significant issue currently on the agenda is the issue of state property. This issue is currently in the limelight and therefore, I am sure it comes as no surprise that the Office of the High Representative and the PIC could not recommend closing the OHR. The Office of the High Representative will remain in place. The international community's engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue in this form. The next opportunity for assessing the progress achieved in this regard will be at the end of June, which is in three months.

Those are the main conclusions, the main things that I wanted to share with you. I would like once again to say, in my capacity as High Representative and my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs, that the European Union is committed to the EU perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We expect Bosnia and Herzegovina, its institutions and political leaders to confirm that they share that commitment.

Yesterday at the meeting it was repeated several times that Mr. Inzko is arriving as a friend, as a familiar friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Allow me to say that I am leaving as friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that I have grown to love this country and its people, and that in my current capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of a country that is a member of the European Union and NATO, I have already had and will have a series of opportunities to support the efforts that 90 percent of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina support – efforts toward your country joining the club of successful, peaceful, self sustainable and modern countries, which are members of the European Union and NATO. And that is something you can be certain of.

Thank you for your attention. I would now like to invite Mr. Inzko to address you. If anyone wishes to ask me any questions this is their last opportunity to do so.

Aid Mršić, Radio of the Federation of BiH:

You did not use the Bonn Powers while you were here – there, that is the eternal question posed by journalists. You did what you could. In your opinion, in what kind of condition are you leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Miroslav Lajčák, High Representative and EU Special Representative:

I used the Bonn Powers approximately 40 times. Above all else, I focused on problems related to the lack of cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, on speeding up the adoption of legislation that aids the arresting of war-crimes indictees or proofs that certain people are criminals, that their hands are stained with blood, and to, in actual fact, help this country deal with the difficult heritage of the war. As you know, my philosophy has always been, and this remains my conviction, that I do not have the Bonn Powers for the purpose of imposing the direction in which Bosnia and Herzegovina should move – I consider that this responsibility needs to be assumed by the local political leaders and that you, the media and citizens, need to demand that they do this. For me the Bonn Powers were an instrument that served to help me prevent this country from straying from the right path.

I know that what you now want to say is that I did not use the Bonn Powers in answer to certain rhetoric. Rhetoric and action are not one and the same. Using the Bonn Powers is an action. If there had been action, I then would have used the Bonn powers. Rhetoric is a political method of operation that does not benefit the citizens of this country, however I am convinced that in answer to political activities we need to exercise political instruments, and I made an effort to do

exactly that.

Mirza Ćubura, Nezavisne novine:

You said that the only remaining issue was that of state property, and yet that issue is completely blocked in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Commission fell apart, and the Council of Ministers does not want to or cannot do anything. Did the Peace Implementation Council issue any instructions on how this issue should be unblocked?

Miroslav Lajčák, High Representative and EU Special Representative:

Earlier I deliberately mentioned all of the things that the state institutions, authorities, political leaders succeeded in doing and realizing in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the last 13 months. Nothing is impossible. Several months ago it may have seemed completely inconceivable that the State Parliament would adopt the Brčko amendment, but it happened. As regards state property, we talked in detail about the matter both last night and today. What I would like to emphasize is that the position of the international community is absolutely clearly defined in the position taken by the Peace Implementation Council, the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board Ambassadors, in October last year. Nothing has or will change – we will neither expand our position nor will we make any concessions. It is also clear that the remaining condition will not just disappear and that it must be fulfilled in accordance with the consistent and united position of the Peace Implementation Council. What has been lacking so far is political will. Political will is the key and, of course, it must be found and this issue must be resolved.

Rešad Dautefendić, Dnevni list:

Mr. Lajčák, do you feel any guilt with regard to the difficult political situation that you are leaving behind in Bosnia and Herzegovina – all these things that your successor will

inherit?

Miroslav Lajčák, High Representative and EU Special Representative:

I have already said, several times before, that in my capacity as High Representative I of course feel responsible for all of the successes and failures of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That does not change. I am proud of the fact that during my mandate Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. I am proud that we succeeded in creating an atmosphere of collective responsibility, where the local political leaders assume responsibility for the fate of this country and its citizens. We started off with the meetings of the six political leaders, and that process today continues in the form of the Prud Process, which, I am convinced, is the only way this country will move forward. I am also pleased that we succeeded in shifting the attention of the international community back to Bosnia and Herzegovina to an adequate level, which resulted in a series of talks, documents and decisions at the highest political level, regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only as a result of such attention can we expect the international community to take the right decisions.

The political situation is what it is. I certainly made an effort to improve it. Whether I could have done more or not is a matter of fate. Certainly, we should all be aware that you elect your political leaders not so that everyone can then sit with their arms folded and comment on what the High Representative does or does not do and should or should not do, but in order for them, above all else, to assume responsibility. I certainly made every effort to help them do that.

Okay. Thank you once again. I would now like to ask Mr. Valentin Inzko to address you.

Valentin Inzko, High Representative and EU Special Representative

Hvala ministre Lajčák,

Dragi prijatelji, kao što znate ja također znam vaše jezike, no molim vas da imate razumijevanja jer ih dugo nisam koristio, a pogotovo profesionalno. Tako da ću vam se ovom prilikom obratiti na engleskom, radnom jeziku ove institucije.

So once again, thank you Minister Lajčák.

As the High Representative and EU Special Representative I fully appreciate the responsibility and importance of my new role. But, at this stage I do not want to go into any details as I first want to get more familiar with the current situation.

I would like however to express my and the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board's a great appreciation for the contribution made by Miroslav Lajčák.

Our handover was very professional, very cordial, very friendly and very smooth, and I am sure that Foreign Minister Lajcak will be a very reliable friend of BiH, also in the future!

Dear Friends!

I was here immediately after the war, I have seen this country destroyed by war and looking from this perspective I have **huge respect** for the efforts you have all made in reconstructing your country and moving also towards your European future.

I am very happy to be back here in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in a completely different role.

Some may have high expectations from me, but let me be clear

that it is impossible to fulfil them all. Or, as your people would say: "Ko je svima ugodio, taj se još nije rodio".

In my role as the EU Special Representative I will help you to pick up pace and move quickly in the process of EU integration.

The EU is committed that 2009 is the year of the Western Balkans. Accordingly, this is an opportunity that cannot be missed.

Those who want to work on a European future of this country will have a **partner** in **me** and in the International Community.

And there is no other way forward.

Before taking on my mandate I had very constructive consultations with the EU, US, Russia and other key partners. It is no secret that they are all concerned about the general situation and frequently also stagnation in this country.

This message has been conveyed to your political leaders by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board repeatedly.

In preparation for my mission I remembered very relevant advice by Picasso who once said:

"If you really want to do something, you'll find a way; if you don't, you'll find an excuse."

My role is to help you find the way.

There are so many urgent political reforms that need to be addressed.

The agenda of five objectives and two conditions set by the Peace Implementation Council must be fulfilled. Focus is now clearly on the State Property and launching of the inventory.

Transition of OHR to a substantially reinforced EU mission is our common goal and it will take place as soon as the

conditions are fully met.

Rest assured that I will strongly engage in the planning for this EU Mission, in order to make it a success.

There are many other pressing issues that all political leaders must tackle. The global economic situation is very serious; BiH's leaders need now to take action against continuing economic and financial challenges.

And the best ways to overcome this crisis is to make progress on the European Agenda.

The rest of the region is moving forward, if you are not moving forward you are not standing still – you are moving backward.

As the representative of both the International Community and the European Union, I believe in partnership and I see myself as your partner and facilitator.

However, I will not hesitate to use my full authority if the need arises. This will not be my first choice, but my last resort.

Dear friends!

Thank you for your attention, this should suffice for today.

In any case, I have asked my press office to liaise closely with you to ensure that all your requests are addressed and promptly met.

Thank you, hvala