

## **What Europe wants from Obama**

From the perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina, our priority is that the US, along with its international partners, remains fully engaged in supporting the countries of the Western Balkans as they move towards full integration in the EU.

When George Bush took over from Bill Clinton in 2001, Bosnia was still very fragile, politically, socially and economically, its people still dealing with the immediate and terrible legacy of the war. Eight years on, as a new administration takes over in Washington, a huge amount of progress has been made. Bosnia is now poised to complete its postwar recovery and secure full integration in NATO and the EU.

However our mission is not yet complete. Significant threats have arisen that could derail the entire process in its final stages. That is why Bosnia continues to require close attention and sustained engagement.

The Dayton Peace Agreement was signed only after the US took the lead on forging a negotiated settlement to the conflict of the early 1990s. The US continues to be directly involved in helping Bosnia establish the institutions and practices that will allow it to develop as a normal democracy. It is this process which must now be supported so that the country and its leadership can ensure that the ad hoc aspects of the postwar settlement — such as the Office of the High Representative — can be phased out and replaced with permanent institutions that are a normal part of European democratic governance.

Washington is uniquely equipped to support this process. For all the differences between the US and the 27 EU Member States in terms of languages and culture, there is a bedrock of shared belief in democracy, in social, political and economic freedoms and in the rule of law. We hope that the new US administration will bring a renewed commitment to the core values that have traditionally underpinned the trans-Atlantic relationship — the same values that will underpin Bosnia and Herzegovina's continued progress.

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