

Statement of the Contact Group, London, 16/9/97

Statement on Bosnia of the Contact Group Foreign Ministers

New York, 24 September 1997

We, the Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group countries (France, Germany, Italy, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and the United States) meeting at the United Nations in New York on September 24 together with the High Representative and representatives of the Luxembourg EU Presidency, EU Commission, reiterate our unity and determination in pursuing a stable and lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Deeply saddened by the tragic loss of 12 dedicated individuals in the recent UN helicopter crash in Bosnia, we pledge to continue their work to advance the cause of peace.

We welcome the progress that has been made since the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board Ministerial in Sintra and reaffirm our unified commitment to hold all parties strictly to the implementation of all elements of the Sintra Declaration. Those who honor their commitments to implement fully the Peace Agreement will receive our support. The Contact Group will advocate increasingly strong measures against those impeding progress in implementation of the Dayton Accords and the Sintra Declaration.

We congratulate the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the peaceful exercise of their democratic right to vote and call upon the Bosnian people to respect the results of the September 13-14 municipal elections and to support installation of new municipal governments. We expect all authorities, including cantonal and local officials, to ensure the rapid, peaceful and orderly implementation of the municipal election results. This will facilitate the enhanced delivery of international assistance. The Contact Group will support strict measures against any individual or group impeding full implementation of municipal election results, as announced by the OSCE.

We congratulate the OSCE and its mission staff in Bosnia, under the leadership of Robert Frowick, for their effective supervision of the elections, as well as SFOR, UN IPTF, and OHR, for ensuring the success of the elections.

In that spirit, we request that the OSCE, at its Permanent Council meeting in Vienna tomorrow, agree to undertake supervision of Republika Srpska Assembly elections to be held on a date proposed by the President of Republika Srpska in consultation with the OSCE. We also request that the OSCE undertake the supervision of other elections to be held in Republika Srpska at a later date, in accordance with constitutional provisions, taking note of the agreement signed in Belgrade today and looking forward to consultation with its signatories. We call on all parties in the Republika Srpska to cooperate fully with the OSCE, to participate in these elections and any other elections called in accordance with constitutional provisions, and to ensure that elections fully meet democratic standards, and are held without intimidation and with full respect for the freedom of movement, expression, and media.

We condemn the continuing use of media to propagate knowingly disinformation and inflammatory messages that undermine support for the Peace Agreement. Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be capable of, and are responsible for, maintaining media standards that are consistent with those of present-day Europe. The Contact Group strongly supports the work of the High Representative in this area and reaffirms his right to curtail or suspend any media network or program whose output is in persistent and blatant contravention of either the spirit or letter of the Peace Agreement, as provided under the Sintra Declaration.

The Contact Group reiterates the urgent need to proceed with the reform of all police forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina in line with the principles of democratic policing and in full cooperation with the UN IPTF. Toward that end, the Contact Group stresses that all special police must be brought into compliance with all provisions of the Peace Agreement.

We are increasingly concerned about the negative effects of corruption, smuggling and organized crime on the process of peace implementation and economic recovery in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We believe the citizens of

Bosnia and Herzegovina are entitled to far greater transparency and accountability at all levels of government. In this regard, we underscore the important role of an independent, professional media in exposing corruption.

We urge Croatia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to live up fully to their obligations under international agreements and as guarantors under the Dayton peace agreement. Of special concern is the continued refusal to cooperate fully in the transfer of indicted war criminals to the Hague tribunal. Compliance with international commitments will be the prerequisite for international assistance.

We expect the parties to accelerate significantly their implementation of the Peace Agreement. At its December 9-10, 1997 meeting in Bonn, the Peace Implementation Council will examine the level of progress since Sintra and to consider additional measures, as necessary, to bring the parties into compliance with their obligations under the Peace Agreement.

Office of the High Representative