

Statement On Bosnia and Herzegovina - Geneva, 18/3/96

Statement on the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Federation President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister expressed their deep concern about the state of the Federation, especially the lack of implementation of the commitments undertaken at the meeting in Rome on 18 February, 1996. Internal disagreements and diverging views concerning the ultimate shape of the Federation are putting at risk this critical building block for peace. They agreed upon the following:-

1. The commitments undertaken in the Rome statement on the Federation of 18 February, 1996, must be fully implemented. This means:
 1. fully implementing the agreement unifying the City of Mostar,
 2. implementing the unified customs tax and payment system of the Federation,
 3. establishing all cantons and municipalities and their operative structures,
 4. assuring full freedom of movement throughout the Federation, and removing all checkpoints,
 5. establishing full political and religious freedom,
 6. ensuring safe return of all refugees and displaced persons throughout the Federation territory,
 7. submitting a basic defence law to the Federation Parliament.
2. The organisation of the city of Sarajevo will have to be further elaborated, having in mind that Sarajevo is the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as of the Federation. The Office of the High Representative will assist in this process.
3. We reiterate our support for the European Union Administrator of Mostar and the early holding of elections in the city.
4. While Bosniaks and Croats, as constituent peoples along with others, and citizens exercise their sovereign rights as equal partners, we re-affirm the fundamental cantonal concept of the Federation; as stipulated in its constitution, the Federation is composed of federal units, with equal rights and responsibilities. We agree that the intention is not to form distinct, ethnically defined areas. The Federation is the common Entity of Bosniaks, Croats and others within Bosnia and Herzegovina, guaranteeing all basic human rights to its citizens and peoples, including the freedom of movement and the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes.
5. We expect that the Assembly for the Neretva Canton will convene and constitute the canton by 28 March, and likewise that the Middle Bosnia Canton will be constituted by 31 March. By these dates, the Interim Municipal Assemblies in these cantons that have not yet formed must have been constituted.
6. We urge implementation of the Zagreb Agreement on proportional representation in the diplomatic network of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
7. We reiterate the importance of economic and other co-operation between the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of establishing lasting peace and security in the area. We express our determination to improve security in Federation territory and to open up routes into the Federation from all directions.
8. We decided that only those officials who are truly committed to these fundamental principles and to the implementation of agreed measures should serve in public office in Federation institutions, including at the cantonal and municipal level. Those refusing to confirm will be

removed from office.

9. We confirmed the complete separation between the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federation, as provided for by the Constitution and the Dayton Federation Agreement. The existing civilian authorities and their organs in the areas of the Federation controlled by the HVO must now transfer all their functions to the Federation organs and be dissolved. Effective and efficient work structures inside the Federation ministries will be promptly established by means of the immediate transfer of personnel and other resources from ministries and agencies existing on the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina and from existing civilian authorities and organs in the areas of the Federation controlled by the HVO.
10. We took note of the fact that the international donor community will only be motivated to assist in the reconstruction of the Federation area if its authorities implement the Federation agreements. Cantons and municipalities will only be beneficiaries of financial assistance once these units have been constituted and are functionally operational. In the future, the Government of the Federation will be duly represented in discussions and negotiations concerning international reconstruction assistance and related matters.
11. The Federation Assembly will convene, in an extraordinary session if necessary, so that it will pass necessary legislation concerning the cantons, including the question of organising Sarajevo, amendments to the Federation constitution necessary to conform it to the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, concerning defence structures and the adoption of the Federation flag and coat-of-arms.
12. The highest Federation Officials shall meet with the Principal Deputy High Representative on a continuing basis to implement the Federation agreements. This body will invite Federation ministers, members of the Government and the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and others to participate, as appropriate. It will take up its task on 21 March in Sarajevo, with the aim of presenting results of the implementation of the above decisions to the Petersburg Conference on 28 March, 1996. At this conference, the new Federation flag and coat-of-arms will also be presented.

Office of the High Representative