High Representative Miroslav Lajcak's statement at the press conference

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

As you know, I have been dedicated to this region for ten years now, working from high diplomatic functions. First, as the Slovakian ambassador to Belgrade, with responsibility for Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania, then as a special envoy for Javier Solana in Montenegro for implementation of the referendum, and now as High Representative and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the past weeks it became known that a position for Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia was opened. What I told you then in Sarajevo was reported in Slovakia, too: and that was that I was not available for this office considering my mandate in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

However, yesterday morning, upon my return from Brussels, Slovakian Prime Minister Fico told me that he wanted to see **me** in the position of Foreign Minister. I could not turn down such a clear and direct offer.

Still, I wish to point out here that I accepted this offered position only under the condition that my appointment would not create problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that there would be no **vacuum** in the execution of the function of the High Representative. The Slovakian Prime Minister supported

me in this.

Therefore, be assured that there will be **no** vacuum in the position of the High Representative of the International Community in BiH. The continuity of the Office of the High Representative will not be disrupted.

I will be in Bratislava on Monday to formally accept the office of Foreign Minister and thus take over one of the key positions in Slovakia.

After that, I will return to Bosnia and Herzegovina until a solution is found which will ensure continuity of the Office of the High Representative. This Office remains here in its full capacity until the priorities set by the Peace Implementation Council are met.

This morning I informed the PIC ambassadors about this development, and afterwards the Members of the BiH Presidency and the Chair of the Council of Ministers of BiH.

Some will accuse me that by making this step I am leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina in the lurch, and I have already seen it written in the press that I am fed up with everything.

Neither is true. I am very much committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina and will remain so. During my whole mandate I have done everything to help you make progress on the European road, to facilitate the processes leading to full membership and make them faster, because that is the **only** way to make the country stable and prosperous.

In the past six months I have invested a great deal of energy in order to bring the attention of the International Community back to Bosnia and Herzegovina, at a time when many other priorities are on the agenda. You have seen how many clear messages the European Union has sent to the highest officials of your country in the past two days only.

But, if you alone, or those you elected, do not want to help yourselves in this, nobody from outside can impose this lack of will. I would like to quote here the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, who said in a conversation with President Radmanović: «We are ready to help, but **you** must help yourselves first».

Your neighbors want the same as you: European future and a better life. Their leaders work intensively in order to make concrete progress this year.

It is still not too late for Bosnia and Herzegovina to go together with them. But, one needs agreement and compromise to make progress.

Let me tell you one more thing: even when I leave this office, my engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue. Bosnia and Herzegovina will always be able to count on me that, as the Foreign Minister of a country which is a member of the EU and NATO, and considering my experience in the Western Balkans, I will do everything to make the processes of Euro-Atlantic integration for Bosnia and Herzegovina go the right way.

Let me repeat once again; regardless of my future appointment, the continuity of the Office of the High Representative and EU Special Representative will be ensured.

Thank you for your attention.