

Lajčák: EU Integration Addresses Fundamental Issues of BiH Statehood



Significant numbers of BiH citizens tolerate – rather than embrace – the idea of BiH statehood, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Miroslav Lajčák, told an audience of diplomats and Southeast Europe specialists in Washington today.

“Although majorities of each of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s constituent peoples now accept the country as their common homeland, they have completely different visions of the country’s past, its present, and its future,” Ambassador Lajčák said in a speech at Johns Hopkins University. He said it was time for Bosnia and Herzegovina “to agree on the fundamental issues that will enable its journey to Europe,” including the question of a new constitution.

“To join the EU, Bosnia must make its constitutional framework compatible with EU administrative and political requirements,” Ambassador Lajčák said. “I believe that BiH leaders will be able to agree on constitutional steps that are necessary to secure EU membership. Why? Because around 70 percent of the Bosnian electorate want their leaders to take BiH into Europe. The main political players may not be inclined to accommodate one another, but they will be expected to work together to find common agreement on a bare minimum of constitutional arrangements that are consistent with the demands of European

membership.”

Ambassador Lajčák said the International Community had made “a sustained and creative effort to turn Bosnia and Herzegovina into a functional state that can serve the needs of its citizens,” but he warned that, “nationalism still wins votes,” and lamented the fact that “a decade and a half after the war, the vast majority of BiH politicians continue to view almost every issue through a nationalist prism.”

Nationalism, he argued, “is used by all sides to hide the simple fact that politicians regularly fail, and often even fail to try, to deliver concrete benefits for their citizens. As a result, the country’s effort to complete its post-war recovery and move into the next stage of its evolution – the high road to Europe – has been delayed for too long.”

However, there is a positive aspect of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s current situation, Ambassador Lajčák said, since “the incentive of eventual EU membership and the enormous resources that accompany EU integration have combined to address many of the challenges posed by the country’s particular historical problems.”

Ambassador Lajčák said the main goal of the International Community from now on “will be to ensure that EU integration is at the top of the political agenda as the main cohesive factor.” He stressed that “EU integration addresses fundamental issues of BiH statehood” and added that “the EUSR is therefore the natural successor to the OHR as the principal coordinator of international engagement in Bosnia, once the time for OHR closure is right.”