

# Lajčák: We Must Act Robustly And Creatively



The measures taken on 19 October have brought the poisoned political atmosphere in the country into the open,” the High Representative, Miroslav Lajčák, told the UN Security Council in New York today.

The underlying dysfunctionality of the State has poisoned the political atmosphere. Bosnians and Herzegovinians “cannot be expected to put up with corruption, poverty, and the chronic inefficiency of government institutions and public services indefinitely, also preventing country’s smooth progress towards Europe,” he said.

To tackle BiH’s underlying problems the artificially created political crisis related to the Council of Ministers must be overcome. “This is a part of the broader situation in the Western Balkans and requires the full attention of the International Community,” said the High Representative.

The High Representative told the UNSC that the International Community has assessed that the time is not right to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina. Local ownership remains the goal, but with local ownership comes a responsibility for local leaders to make the necessary political compromises required in a modern democratic state.

“The International Community is not a bystander in the politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina; it is a guarantor of the settlement that has maintained peace in the country for more

than a decade,” said the High Representative in his hour-long meeting with the UNSC. “It is clear that the OHR still has a substantial role to play,” said Lajčák adding that “my full mandate as the High Representative remains”.

None of the measures taken by the High Representative on 19 October eliminate the entities’ rights, nor do they affect any element of protection afforded to BiH’s constituent peoples. “My recent amendments facilitate the work of the Council of Ministers and will be a positive recommendation for OHR’s closure when the time comes to discuss that transition. For now, though, that discussion is a long way off,” said the High Representative.

The High Representative informed the UNSC that BiH is now the only country in the Western Balkans not to have a formal, contractual relationship with the EU despite the support of the clear majority of BiH’s population for this process.

The leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina who participate in government majority have blocked the road to Europe; at the same time the country cannot simply stand still when half of all BiH citizens live on or below the poverty line.

The High Representative announced three key areas in which he has focussed to build a functional BiH; Police reform so that the Stabilisation and Association Agreement can be signed, the arrest and transfer to the Hague of the remaining individuals indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and Constitutional reform, which must be launched in order to improve the functionality of the state and its institutions.

Noting that the UN Security Council will discuss an extension of the EUFOR mandate the High Representative said that EUFOR remains a key guarantee that the political issues that must be addressed as part of the country’s post-war recovery will be addressed in a safe and secure environment.

“Compromise and agreement is possible – we saw this recently with the Mostar Declaration on police reform [and] with the adoption of a new Economic Platform by the State and Entity Prime Ministers a few weeks ago,” said the High Representative. “Now, there are two options: escalation or deflation. Local actors can continue to act in bad faith and continue to escalate the situation, or they can act in good faith, and direct Bosnia and Herzegovina back onto its European path.”