

Interview: EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana: “Republika Srpska Must Arrest Karadzic!”

BiH is passing from a Dayton to a Brussels era – It can be argued that BiH has achieved considerable progress in implementing Feasibility Study priority reforms, Solana says

EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana sends a message to the RS officials that they will become the main obstacle on BiH's road to Europe if Radovan Karadzic is not arrested.

“This is a serious situation and it will have to be resolved”, Solana says, responding in writing to our several questions.

Oslobodjenje: How do you see BiH's current progress on its road to EU membership?

Javier Solana: I believe it's not exaggeration to say that Bosnia and Herzegovina has now decisively passed from a Dayton to a Brussels era. In the past several years, BiH has seriously begun to get involved in the process of European integration. This is an important step, if not the most important, in the past two years since Paddy Ashdown became the first EU Special Representative in BiH who is also the High Representative of the International Community.

Open Way

Javier Solana: To be specific, I think I can't stress enough the importance of the Feasibility Study published by the

European Commission in November last year. It represents the first serious step towards EU membership. BiH finally has an open way towards Europe. Whether Bosnia and Herzegovina makes it to that destination depends of BiH's own institutions. It depends on their readiness to establish true cooperation in the interest of BiH citizens, in order to ensure for BiH peace and prosperity offered by Europe. It can be argued that Bosnia and Herzegovina has achieved considerable progress in implementing the priority reforms from the Feasibility Study. This is clearly stated in European Commission's Stabilization and Association Report. However, it's necessary to quicken even more the pace of implementing key reforms, in particular in the field of customs and introduction of VAT, public administration and public broadcasting.

Oslobodjenje: Is it realistic to expect the EU to suggest abolition of the Republika Srpska if its political representatives keep failing to cooperate with the Hague Tribunal and bring Radovan Karadzic to justice?

Javier Solana: It's regrettable that eight years after the signing of the Peace Agreement BiH citizens are still hostages of political forces, especially in the RS, which have not met the key requirement from the Peace Agreement, in other words, not met BiH's international obligations to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The European Union has already introduced visa bans for persons who help Hague indictees evade justice. This list is constantly verified and can be expanded. The European Union fully supports the sanctions introduced by High Representative of the International Community and Special EU Representative Lord Ashdown against key persons and RS institutions obstructing cooperation with the International Tribunal in the Hague. What needs to happen now is simple: RS authorities must arrest all indictees who are at large and transfer them to the Hague. If they don't do this, they will become the main obstacle on BiH's road to Europe. This is a serious situation and must be

resolved.

Oslobodjenje: In which way are the European forces (EUFOR) going to help specifically in the fight against organized crime in BiH?

Javier Solana: You know that the final decision has not been made yet. However, if NATO decides in its June Istanbul Summit to withdraw its SFOR troops from BiH by the end of the year, the European Union will be ready to prepare a force to replace SFOR. This transition will, in a way, symbolize the transition of BiH from Dayton to Brussels, ie from peace stabilization to integration into Europe.

Along with the EU Police Mission, Feasibility Study, 65 million Euros to be spent in BiH in 2004 and the fact that Paddy Ashdown is the first EU Special Representative for BiH, EUFOR will emphasize EU's long-term commitment to BiH and its accession to the EU when the country is ready for that. But, to answer your specific question, I remind you that the goal of the European Union is to establish sustainable police structures which will be under the jurisdiction of BiH authorities in accordance with the best practice in Europe and internationally. EU is currently seeking to achieve this goal through the activities of the EU Police Mission (EUPM) supported by the EU Program for institution building under the auspices of EU regulations on assistance to reconstruction, development and stabilization (CARDS). These efforts contribute to overall peace implementation in BiH and achievement of general goals of the EU in this region, in particular to the initiation of the stabilization and association process. EUPM will continue implementing its principal programs for which it is responsible together with the Steering Board of police forces in BiH. An integrated police unit similar to current SFOR Multinational Specialized Unit (MSU) will be deployed in the initial stages as part of EU forces and will be under military command.

EUFOR AND NATO

Oslobodjenje: Who will be EU's military liaison officer whose arrival is expected soon?

Javier Solana: EU will launch several missions in which it will deploy its military and civilian personnel in the next several months in view of realizing cooperation with SFOR and EU Special Representative / High Representative Paddy Ashdown and BiH authorities, in the transition of SFOR to EU and strengthening of the role of the EU Special Representative.

Oslobodjenje: How certain are you that there will be no overlapping of competencies between EUFOR and NATO HQ, the formation of which is announced in BiH?

Javier Solana: EU forces will continue with their activities on the basis of the excellent work carried out by NATO in the form of the previous Implementation Force (IFOR) and now SFOR. I am convinced that the transition will go smoothly. EUFOR should have the same size of the force as SFOR which is withdrawing from BiH and take over the Dayton mandate for keeping a safe environment in BiH. The NATO HQ should direct its activities to the process of BiH's integration into NATO. NATO and EUFOR should also cooperate on their joint priorities with reference to arresting persons indicted for war crimes and fighting terrorism.

Engagement of any type of EU forces would, naturally, be organized in close cooperation with NATO and in accordance with the agreements in force between EU and NATO. EU and NATO are already developing modalities if NATO and EU make final political decisions as we expect. EU and NATO fully agree that it's necessary to organize a harmonized approach and mutual cooperation in BiH. This is the primary value for us. Our experience in BiH shows that we are the most effective when we are unified".

Ashdown's more important role

Oslobodjenje: What will be the relationship between OHR and EUFOR in BiH?

Javier Solana: EUFOR engagement will be another important step representing further contribution to EU efforts in BiH. Ashdown's role, as the EU Special Representative, will become much more important in the following year. In this role, he will promote EU's overall policy in BiH. Further, one of the principal politico-military goals of the EU force should be supporting the Mission Implementation Plan of the Office of the High Representative and thus supporting the progress BiH has been making on the road to introducing European standards. EU force would also support, in cooperation with other EU and international organizations, activities related to civilian implementation, including fighting organized crime, return process, rule of law and implementation of other civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The EU military force commander will soon cooperate with Ashdown bearing in mind his dual role of the EU Special Representative and High Representative of the International Community.

The army helps EU integration

Javier Solana: EU troops would have a wide mandate and resources such as those at the disposal of the outgoing SFOR troops", Solana says. "In fact, 80% of SFOR are troops from EU member countries. These EU troops would be responsible for preservation of the considerable success achieved by NATO – a safe environment in BiH. However, these units would also have specific tasks. Their job would be to help the integration of this country in Europe and in particular, as you suggested in your question, to help BiH authorities in fighting the plague of organized crime.