

Presentation by the High Representative Mr. Carlos Westendorp on SRT

Since this is the first time that I am addressing you, first of all, I would like to introduce myself.

My name is Carlos Westendorp and I was born in Madrid 60 years ago. I am married and I have three children. I am Spanish, and, as a member of the Socialist Government of Felipe Gonzales, I followed closely all the sufferings of the people who, with great courage and strength, endured the tragedy of this country, the saddest tragedy that human beings can face: the war.

One reason that led me to accept the post of the representative of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the opportunity to contribute, by my personal effort, in seeing that such a tragedy does not occur again. If you ask me why they have chosen me, I would not be able to answer you precisely, but one possible explanation is my long professional commitment to European integration, into which Bosnia and Herzegovina is also invited. The other is that I come from a country which went through a civil war which caused more than a million dead. A country which suffered 30 years of dictatorship and which, at the end, succeeded in overcoming all the hatred caused by those events through the appropriate transfer of democracy. Thanks to that, we can allow ourselves today to share the common destiny of free and advanced peoples of this planet. I come, as you are very well aware, from a country which has great admiration and respect for the Serb people, and which has no personal interests in this area, except to help you to overcome your difficulties in the same manner in which we Spanish have done through peace and democracy, opposing tensions.

As you know, my country solved the issues of a need for global organisation on the State level, full development of cultural identity and policy of regions which compose the country. I sincerely expect that this introduction will help me with this difficult path I have taken.

I do not bring a formed opinion with me. Not a single prejudice. I am only led by a wish to fulfil, in full and sincere manner, Peace Agreements signed in Dayton and Paris 18 months ago.

These Agreements are a historical event for all of you. That means overcoming of the war through peace.

For you, the war meant loss of your loved ones, destruction of your houses, destruction and devastation.

The peace, on the other hand, brings you the most valuable gift for every human being. And that is life. Without life, there is nothing.

But a peace which goes further than simply existing. A peace which brings hope for a better life, with the possibility of employment for everybody. Of course if the peace becomes lasting.

The Peace Agreements are there to serve that purpose, and that explains our presence here. All of us, international organizations, SFOR, UN, OSCE, NGO's, my Office, we are here to ensure that the peace you deserve becomes lasting.

We are your friends, and not your enemies.

We are not an occupying force, as some media want to present us. To compare SFOR, which works so hard for your peace and welfare and which has even sacrificed the lives of its people in this mission – some of them are from my hometown – to compare them with an occupying army, or, which is even worse, with the Nazi forces from the Second World War, is irresponsible.

The SFOR mission is to guarantee a secure environment for all in the entire country for your benefit and the benefit of your families. Therefore, you must stop throwing incendiary devices at their soldiers, and authorities should refrain from inciting people against those who are here and whose wish is to help you.

In order to have a lasting peace, we have to rely on the recovery of the economy and respecting of fundamental freedoms, and it cannot be maintained without perspectives for employment and hope for a better life for the

entire nation.

But the economy is not everything...

Only tolerance, peaceful co-existence of peoples with different religious beliefs, different ethnic groups. It is not worth living in this or in any other country without honouring human rights, without the possibility of electing leaders for citizens.

The task of the of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to assist you to live a better life and to live in democracy.

You have the right to say that the international community has given greater economic assistance to the Federation than to Republika Srpska, and that is true.

The reason is that the international community conditioned a great part of its assistance on the honouring of the Dayton Agreement, and sadly I have seen myself that the honouring of the Agreement from the Republika Srpska side has not been sufficient so far.

I must tell you now, that the persons you elected to represent you in the common institutions and to implement the Peace Agreements do not co-operate to the extent they should, and they even do not attend the meetings.

You must hold them responsible for that because, if we continue this way, they will deprive you of all the assistance which the international community is ready to give you, so you can have a better future for your children.

Believe me, I would be more than happy if I could give economic assistance to those villages and towns, those regions of the Republika Srpska which honour the Peace Agreements, to those places where mayors and political leaders, together with us, make serious efforts in order to implement the Peace Agreements.

But you are also aware that corruption is the biggest obstacle for the economic development of the entire population.

Corruption, which means illegal benefit for a small number of people, to the detriment of the entire population.

You must request from your leaders that they start implementing immediately all possible measures, to take away this burden which is destroying the Republika Srpska.

The international community is here to help you with that.

When you cast your vote, do it thinking of those who are prepared to remove the cancer of this society, and as we speak about votes let me tell you something you already know.

A people cannot prosper without democracy, without the rule of law, without respecting human rights.

The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have the fortune of other peoples of eastern Europe. While in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Rumania, the incredible fall of the communist system was succeeded by a peaceful transition to democracy and commercial economy, you saw how this process was brutally interrupted by the cruel war.

The war, which, like all wars, created hatred. And you elected the same political leaders who caused the war. I think most sincerely that we can look with hope towards the future in this country only when you decide to replace these leaders with others, instead of looking at the past, look to the future.

But I will be honest with you, it will be very hard for you to choose freely, at least until the police behave in a democratic way, until it is composed of professionals serving its citizens and your security. Not the way it has been so far, a group of released soldiers used by some leaders to intimidate citizens.

The events from a couple of weeks ago in Banja Luka police station, where clear evidence was found of the violation of human rights, prove this.

As Winston Churchill said, the difference between dictatorship and democracy is when somebody rings your

doorbell at five o'clock in the morning – you open the door knowing that the milkman is coming.

Therefore, there is an urgency for deep reform and professionalism of your police and that is why IPTF are here; help them that they can help you.

Your vote will not have great significance, let's be honest, until you all have independent media which will present different options for which you can freely vote, not slogans and propaganda which systematically place conditions for you to vote for those parties which monopolise the state powers.

The media must open up to all political forces for all to have the possibility to choose those who will best represent your interests, not to be forced to choose those offered by the official position.

It is not just; we are here to help you, as I said; to present us as your enemies, rather than friends, is not just and we cannot accept that.

I have the possibility of restricting or suspending those programmes which are contrary to the truth, impartiality and peace.

And I prefer the media to open up, rather than close a single one. That is why we are proposing practical mechanisms to your authorities to rectify the misinformation. My presence here is one of them and I am grateful to those who allow me to be before you now.

I hope that this situation will improve soon.

There is nothing I would regret more than to be forced to use other means which I have available.

In only few days you will have a better opportunity to elect people who will decide all issues related to local and municipal life.

OSCE, which undertakes great efforts to make these elections free and fair, has invested a great deal of money into this and mobilised a great number of personnel.

SFOR also is making great efforts to send new contingents which will make it possible for you to vote safely.

Do not let all these efforts be in vain, nor the basic rights you have as citizens be denied to you, and that is to elect your representatives.

The President of the Republika Srpska decided, within her constitutional authority, to call for new elections that you may elect representatives for the National Assembly.

This is an invitation to you to decide with your electoral decision which persons you wish to govern your destiny in the coming years, which persons are the most competent to resolve the economic and social problems which trouble the Republika Srpska.

I claim personally that neither I nor the international community will stand on the side of any person or specific political option.

We only speak for the benefit of democracy.

Where there is a problem, the only way to solve it is to give options to people, options to choose those who they believe can solve it best.

Those opposing the elections are not true democrats.

I also wish to tell you that, at the peak of the political confrontation between Pale and Banja Luka, in which we did not take part in any way, we are accused that we sometimes instigate the dissolution of the Republika Srpska. For us it is completely clear.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – a state consisting of three peoples and two entities.

The courageous people of the Republika Srpska can be at peace? The international community will never tolerate

anything which negates its cultural and political identity, or territorial integrity.

I do not want to tire you more.

This is the first time I have addressed you and I do not wish it to be the last.

If I am boring you, I am sure that next time I show up on your screens you will switch to some more entertaining programme.