

Lajčák: BiH Poised for Strategic Steps Forward



Despite conflicting aspirations among major parties and an undertow of nationalism that undermines social, economic and political progress, Bosnia and Herzegovina is poised to take strategic steps forward, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Miroslav Lajčák, said today in his address to the UN Security Council.

Ambassador Lajčák described the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, which will take place on June 16 in Luxembourg, as a development “of enormous significance” for Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, he added that, “the important challenge for the BiH authorities will be implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, which contains not only benefits, but also obligations. The signing of the SAA means that everyone now has to deal with the future. I know from the experience of my own country that the challenges of EU membership are not to be underestimated. Ultimately a country and its political class must have a vision of themselves as a member of the EU that has earned the right to stand shoulder to shoulder with the other members of the EU.”

In recent months, the High Representative/EU Special Representative said, BiH politicians have often failed to show the sort of creativity and self-confidence that is required to forge a common path. Instead they have resorted to nationalist rhetoric, because “nationalism means votes and has been a successful recipe for winning elections. And the fact of the matter is that, up until recently, EU integration had become collateral damage to this calculation.” He warned that this

tendency may become more pronounced ahead of the October elections.

However, in his remarks to the Security Council the High Representative/EU Special Representative also highlighted examples of good will and pragmatism, citing the parliamentary resolution on residence requirements for voting in Srebrenica. He described this as “a significant development in terms of substance, but also in terms of the fact that there was full agreement on such a sensitive issue. This is the sort of political maturity that we need to see much more of, not only on Srebrenica, but on all political challenges the country will face.”

Ambassador Lajčák said that “a major step forward” in the international community’s strategy for a transition from the OHR to the EUSR was taken in February when the PIC Steering Board “reached unanimous agreement on a strategy based on five objectives and two conditions that have to be delivered by the BiH authorities.” He reiterated the five objectives: an acceptable and sustainable resolution on the apportionment of State Property, an acceptable and sustainable resolution of defence property, completion of the Brčko Final Award, fiscal sustainability, and entrenchment of the Rule of Law; and the two conditions: signing of the SAA and a positive assessment of the situation in BIH by the PIC Steering Board based on full compliance with the Dayton Peace Agreement.