

Statement by the High Representative

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I am aware that these are difficult, but also very important days for the people of Republika Srpska – both its political leaders as well as the ordinary citizens. I have full understanding that they worry about their friends and relatives in Yugoslavia and the political and military fate of that country.

So far, almost everybody has reacted to the events in neighboring Yugoslavia with restraint and dignity. I am very impressed by this, and would like to thank the officials for having maintained such a calm environment. I am also grateful to the citizens. The vast majority has decided to express their opinions in a peaceful way. This is the way forward. With this behavior, Republika Srpska has demonstrated to the world its political maturity. It deserves great credit for this.

It is clear that there are attempts to destabilize the situation, attempts by forces both inside and outside Republika Srpska. These forces are not interested in peace or the well-being of Republika Srpska. They thrive in war and unrest, and some of them act on behalf of another leadership, which is under pressure now and wants to transfer its problems to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The International Community and I are determined to keep Bosnia and Herzegovina out of the maneuvers. Whatever happens in neighboring Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina is another state, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected and Republika Srpska is an entity of its own, which has to go its own way. Thanks to the presence of the

International Community, it has the chance to economically recover from its own war, and become prosperous and truly democratic.

We are determined to help the legitimate authorities of Republika Srpska find a satisfactory, democratic and peaceful solution to the present political tensions. Republika Srpska has institutions that have worked very well and efficiently and should be allowed to continue to do so, free of any attempts to destabilize it: it has a fully functioning National Assembly with a committed Speaker, it has a fully functioning Government, and it has a Vice President who is carrying out his official duties.

Under the circumstances, the only sensible approach is to keep in place and continue to cooperate with these existing institutions. While Mr. Sarovic is the Vice President and there is a vacancy in the Presidency, the Constitution of Republika Srpska does not allow for a new prime minister designate to be nominated. Mr. Dodik's government therefore continues to perform its duties in full possession of its powers. I have discussed these matters with Mr Radisic, Mr Sarovic, Mr Dodik and Mr Djokic in recent days. Having heard their views, I firmly believe that the best solution is to maintain this situation until a calmer period returns to the region.

In the coming weeks, it will be important to continue to resist all the attempts by irresponsible politicians to create disorder. I believe, the overwhelming majority of citizens of Republika Srpska, share that views. Once again, I want to place on record my great admiration for the behavior the vast majority of citizens in the RS have displayed in recent weeks. In the eyes of the world, it has brought great credit to Republika Srpska as a whole.