

Statement

Securing peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina amending the Treaty of Dayton

It has been almost ten years since the Treaty of Dayton put an end to the shooting war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since then, the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina has made good progress. However, the provisions laid down in the Dayton Treaty have proved to bear dangerous limits. Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is far from being secure although the country is currently shrouded in deceptive calmness. Against this background, it is worrying that the international community of states is losing interest in the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The international attention, especially the political world, has long since focussed on other areas. In the western countries, ever more people are asking the question when the international community will finally leave Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Peaceful co-existence of different groups is still at risk

At a closer look, it becomes clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina are in an awkward situation. The country is practically divided along national lines. Only 50% of the refugees returned as it was agreed in Dayton. But most of them only moved to regions, where they were safe from discrimination and persecution because of their national origins. There is deep mistrust between the groups which determines their daily lives in a variety of ways. Ethnical discrimination is nothing unusual.

Powerful central government would be needed for economic and political development

The central government of the country is too weak compared to the authorities of the entities. The constitutional structure does not allow a proper functioning of the central government and prevents policies from having an effect beyond the respective national groups. Due to the double or even triple state machineries, the ratio of government expenditures to GNP is extremely high and in many respects presents a strain on the country's economic prospects. In practice, this structure also entails considerable legal uncertainty. In the long run, this situation is unacceptable for economic and for political reasons.

The role of the international community is increasingly ambivalent

Being placed under the semiprotectorate of the international community, Bosnia and Herzegovina is on the drip of international subsidies without any prospects of a sustainable economic development. Although there is absolutely no doubt about the laudable services rendered by the High Representative, there has recently been an increasing number of critical voices pointing out

that such a protectorate will have problematic effects on the democratic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The existing structures generate a beneficiary mentality which is dangerous in economic and political terms. If Bosnia and Herzegovina is to have a future, it is necessary to create the prerequisites for the population to develop its visions in a democratic and independent way.

Resignation, stagnation and increasing poverty undermine the still fragile foundation of peace

The present situation is characterised by resignation and stagnation. Given an official unemployment rate of 42%, rapidly growing poverty and gloomy economic forecasts, it is no wonder that the vast majority of the population and especially of the young people (65%) have no confidence in the future of their country. Bribery and crime are among the evils that flourish under these circumstances and reinforce the population's sense of insecurity. The fact that many of the wanted war criminals are still at large only helps to make things worse. The social situation of a large part of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not likely to provide a solid basis for peace. The ensuing dangers are obvious.

The Treaty of Dayton has reached its limits

There is no indication that the provisions laid down in the Treaty of Dayton can create the necessary perspective for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Treaty of Dayton was a painful but in the situation of that time the best possible compromise to achieve. Those who wanted Bosnia and Herzegovina at that time had to accept the Treaty of Dayton. Despite all its positive effects, the inherent ambiguity of this treaty has never been resolved. With the separation into two precisely shaped entities, it sanctions the consequences of extreme violence. It played a decisive role in the process of establishing two legal systems in one country. When it was signed, it put an end to the shooting war and prepared the ground for a new beginning and for reconstruction, but today it prevents Bosnia and Herzegovina from developing to a constitutional state and a truly European society. Today's advocates of Bosnia and Herzegovina must insist on overcoming the ambiguity of Dayton. This includes a clear definition of the international community's role as well as the development of a real chance of joining the European Union sometime.

The peace process needs a strong fresh impetus

It is time to give the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina a fresh impetus. It is time to put peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina on a solid foundation. It is high time to review and amend the Treaty of Dayton. The state and the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina will only have a future, if they succeed in creating governmental structures which guarantee safety for all groups of the population and promote the economic and social development of the whole country. The process

of reconciliation between the groups will only make substantial progress, if stable political and legal systems as well as economic and social prospects will be developed for the whole country.

Amending the Treaty of Dayton is top priority

Therefore we are asking the international community as well as the decision-makers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the signatory states of the Treaty of Dayton, the governments of the European Union and the littoral states to use the approaching 10th anniversary of the Treaty of Dayton in 2005 as an opportunity to call an international conference of states in order to review and evaluate the progress made so far. The conference should be aimed at strengthening best practices and overcoming the obstacles to the further development of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are asking the decision-makers to draw up a peace treaty which will ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina will grow together and reach stability.

Responsibility for Bosnia and Herzegovina is responsibility for Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina needs the international community's support. The other way round, the international community, in particular Europe, need Bosnia and Herzegovina as a proof of successful peace policies in recognition of variety and diversity. A failure in the medium-term would compromise the stability of the entire region and the littoral states' prospects of admission, let alone the personal fate of the people. A failure in the medium-term would be another failure of the European Union and would hit hard the common foreign and security policy, the European interests and the European vision.

Preventive policies indicate grown sense of responsibility

Unfortunately, the general political bustle tends to give priority to highly critical and topical issues, while unpleasant issues which will be topical in the medium-term are all too often neglected. If there is no political courage and no political will to take necessary and reasonable action, Bosnia and Herzegovina is very likely to be faced with another political crisis.

We oppose this scenario as we believe in the learning capacity of democratic societies.

This statement was signed by

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