Resolution on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Following a debate held on 16 June 2010, the European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by its Committee on Foreign Affairs on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

The European perspective: overall, Parliament expresses its dissatisfaction over the limited progress achieved by BiH as a potential candidate country on its path towards stabilisation and development, and as a potential candidate country for EU membership. It notes with growing concern this country's unstable political climate and the lack of a common vision shared by all political forces, and strongly condemns the use of inflammatory language, which undermines the process of inter-ethnic reconciliation and the functioning of State structures. It calls for a halt of divisive nationalistic and secessionist rhetoric that polarises the society and recalls that EU membership means accepting the values and rules on which the EU is based, namely respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, solidarity, tolerance, democracy and the rule of law including respect for the independence of the judiciary. Parliament calls on the two entities in this country, and all political actors, and in particular the government of the Republika Srpska to respect the Dayton Peace Agreement in its entirety and not challenge actions undertaken on the basis of this agreement and UN Security Council resolutions. Welcoming the achievements of the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) and EUFOR Althea, and in particular the decision to extend its mission by two further years, Parliament awaits with interest information on the EUPM's precise mandate under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance 2010. Parliament invites the EU and its Member States to counteract the indifference of large parts of the political establishment by establishing privileged partnership and providing support to civil society, independent media and the business community.

Constitutional reform and the reform of the judiciary: Parliament reiterates its position on the requirements that should be achieved through constitutional reform:

- the State should have sufficient legislative, budgetary, executive and judicial powers in order to be capable of meeting the EU accession criteria;
- the number of administrative levels involved in managing the country should be proportional to BiH's financial resources;
- all citizens must enjoy the same rights without any discrimination in full compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR);
- special attention should be given to the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups.

Parliament recalls that strengthening the central State does not mean weakening the Entities but creating the conditions based on the principle of subsidiarity for an efficient administration capable of implementing national reform efforts, conducting efficient international relations and, by doing so, preparing the entire country for EU accession. It calls on the on BiH authorities to amend, within the comprehensive constitutional reform, the relevant constitutional provisions and respective provisions in the BiH Electoral Law as soon as possible in order to comply with the ECHR ruling in the Sejdi-Finci case, which clearly indicates that the current BiH constitution discriminates against people referred to as 'others'. Further efforts are needed to encourage the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to vote at the forthcoming general elections in October 2010.

Fighting war crimes, organised crime and corruption: Parliament welcomes the cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and stresses that further efforts are

needed to find and arrest Ratko Mladi and Goran Hadžic. It urges the BiH authorities to speed up the implementation of the National War Crime Strategy and make further progress in the process of dealing with the tragic past of this region (e.g. the commemoration of the Srebrenica massacre). Parliament calls on the BiH authorities to include a definition of sexual violence in the Criminal Code in line with international standards. Parliament calls for efforts to be made so as to:

- address the needs of those still living in collective centres and, promote the return of those who can not return to their homeland, for example to the devastated area of Posavina;
- build high-security state prisons;
- fight corruption;
- combat human trafficking.

Visa liberalisation: Parliament welcomes the adoption on 27 May of the Commission's legislative proposal on visa liberalisation and calls on the Commission to verify that the remaining benchmarks are met in the coming months, with the aim of clearing the way for the Council and Parliament to approve the introduction of the visa waiver for Bosnian citizens by the end of 2010. Visa liberalisation for all BiH citizens is an important factor for further EU integration and inter-ethnic reconciliation.

The situation of the education system: Parliament encourages this country to improve the overall quality of education in line with the needs of the labour market and the standards of the Bologna process. It underlines that education is a primary vehicle for genuine inter-ethnic reconciliation; considers that, in the context of EU assistance, increased attention should be paid to promoting an inclusive, non-discriminatory education system, based on tolerance and respect for diversity and on efforts to reach an understanding of the common history. It stresses the importance of eliminating the segregation of different ethnic groups (two schools under one roof) by developing common education programmes and integrated classes in both entities and invites the authorities to re-visit the current rigid and costly methods of diploma recognition.

Economic situation, social policy: Parliament calls on all actors to pursue persistent economic reform efforts, take concerted actions of jurisdictions and facilitate economic activities, including the removal of bureaucratic barriers, by creating a long term strategy for sustainable development which would address, among other things, education, research and development (R&D), infrastructure, agriculture, environment and energy. Efforts need to be made to attract foreign investment. In this respect, Members call for the creation of a single economic space aimed at further internal integration as well as better land and labour markets. They invite the BiH authorities to put in place measures aimed at mitigating poverty and developing a social safety net that is better targeting the poor, the socially excluded and the vulnerable groups, especially the Roma.

Given the country’s budgetary difficulties, Parliament calls on the Federation’s parliament to adopt further measures aimed at more fiscal discipline. Measures are also called for in the areas of renewable energies and energy efficiency, environmental rehabilitation and improving the quality of healthcare.

Regional cooperation: lastly, in the area of regional cooperation, which is fundamental for good neighbourly relations, Parliament calls on the Bosnian authorities to find a solution that ensures the regional mobility of citizens of Kosovo and the possibility to travel to Bosnia and Herzegovina. It invites Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to find a negotiated solution with regard to the Croatian construction plans for Pelješac bridge, to which Bosnia and Herzegovina is opposed. Parliament notes that durable stability and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans and the whole EU can not be envisaged as long as political stalemate in BiH persists.