

“Are Europe’s Nations prepared to give up national interests and rights to develop common European Armed Forces?”

*Remarks by Mr. Selmo Cikotić,
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- Your Excellencies, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends and Colleagues:

It is my distinct pleasure to be here and to have the opportunity to address this distinguished gathering today.

I would like to present some issues from the perspective of my country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a country that has benefited a lot from European Union defense capabilities, and which sees an opportunity now to give itself its bid of contribution to building safe and stable region and Europe as a whole.

Introduction

- The indivisibility of security in the contemporary world as but one of the many uniting factors and contributor to building European identity.
- No nation can remain isolated and retain recourse to security threats in a purely unilateral manner.
- Stability of European Union can not be achieved without stable and secure all European regions, including Western Balkans and Bosnia and Herzegovina as a part of both the Region and Europe.
- Globalization has created many benefits, globally – simultaneously made us more vulnerable.
- Although what one could term ‘classical’ threat has diminished - significant increase in security challenges that are less tangible.
- This situation is coupled with the fact that very little remains constant insofar as European and global events – political and economic....

- The evolving nature of challenges requires creative and innovative thinking
- Most appropriate form if addressing contemporary challenges was establishment of the CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) as a pillar of the EU, the development of operational capability of the ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy), displaying growing synergy within the European security and defense community.
- This synergy is beneficial to all of us. By coming together, we can combat collective problems on a much wider scale.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina, has had, and continues to have, first-hand experience of this synergy, utilizing EU defense capabilities.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina moving from a consumer of the EU capabilities to a valid contributor and an integral part of those.

Perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 02 December 2004, the European Union launched a military operation of ALTHEA as the largest operation the European Union has embarked on to date.
- This mission represents as a landmark in building the European Union Defense Capabilities and a new opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- This military operation is but one of the many European Union engagements in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Equally important political engagement, monitoring process, economical aid.. Office of the EU Special Representative.
- EUFOR operation gives high credibility to the Thessalonica Declaration from 2003 on European perspectives of the Western Balkan Countries. It became also highly motivating factor for BiH to peruse with needed reforms to meet integration requirements.
- Beside its primary mission, the provision of a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, moreover, EUFOR

responsibilities extend to many other areas concerning our armed forces and the civil-military environment.

- For Bosnia and Herzegovina, the presence of the European Union is extremely important. As such, we are on parallel reform paths, undertaking the long road towards European Union membership, and at the same time also aspiring to NATO membership.
- Through the ongoing Defense reforms, we are building our own capacity to ensure that we are able to undertake all military tasks ourselves, enabling completion of foreign military presence in the current form. This natural and necessary progression will allow Bosnia and Herzegovina to fully move away from being a consumer of security capabilities to a provider.
- Last year Bosnia and Herzegovina opened negotiations on our Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. Current delay caused by lack of political consensus in BiH on Police reform modalities. Overcoming these obstacles will create new framework for co-operation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union.
- Our aspirations towards joining EU go side by side with our aspiration to join NATO. Two different, but complementary processes
- Since beginning of 2007 BiH actively participates in NATO PfP Program. We developed our first IPP and embarked upon the Planning and Review Process, allowing us to begin to identify and evaluate forces and capabilities that could be used for multi-national training, exercises, and operations.
- Our Defense capabilities which we developed with an extensive assistance and advise by NATO could in a future also be useful assets to the European Union if required or desired.
- Our intent is that standards and norms we implement are mutually compatible with European Union Defense capabilities, we would still like to ensure that to the largest extent possible that our strategic documents and structures are also compatible with those of the European Union.

- We are grateful for the ongoing training programs provided to Bosnia and Herzegovina on ESDP, aware that by learning more about European Defense and security policy we can make sure that the implementation of our military reforms will comply with current and future requirements expected of European Union members.
- Our strong commitment is to create capabilities to be able to take over all responsibilities currently exercised by EUFOR, which should ultimately allow for the withdrawal of EUFOR and the beginning of a new phase of partnership with the European Union – primarily with the creation of capabilities available for use by the European Union.

Building Common Armed Forces

- Bosnia and Herzegovina is a prime example that Defense Reform and Creation of Single Armed forces can be strong unifying element in an entire process of rehabilitation of war-torn country.
- Model of European Union integration, including integration of military capabilities is equally important for the Union as for the candidate and aspirant countries. It is not the countries on the outside of the European Union to advise EU member states how to integrate into Common Armed Forces, but it is clear that those processes may facilitate our integration hopes and the provision of capabilities
- Membership in the European Union remains joint goal and objective of candidate and aspirant countries of the Western Balkans. This provides a large potential and platform for efforts from the region and individual countries to contribute to European Union values and ESDP, as well as for the European Union to address co-operation and facilitate activities.

Conclusion

- To conclude my remarks, I would like to thank you all for affording me the opportunity to address this esteemed gathering today. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been the receiver of European Union Defense and Security Efforts and has both, an interest for its further development, as well as to pay you back by being participant in the ongoing processes and active contributor to international peace and security initiatives.
- Since we do want to be a partner in future common security and defense arrangements, we all believe we have to complete the process of strengthening our own security and defense structures in order to be effective at home and credible abroad.