



PRESS RELEASE

Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to hurry on its way to Brussels Paneuropean Conference concluded with adoption of Declaration

Official part of the International Conference of the Paneuropean Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Bosnia and Herzegovina between Dayton and Brussels: from the Dayton Agreement to the Stabilization and Association Agreement", which takes place in Mostar, has been concluded with adoption of the Paneuropean Declaration.

More than 100 participants, representatives of B&H government, European institutions, international community and Paneuropean organizations from several European countries took part in the conference.

In his greeting address at the opening of the Conference, President of the Paneuropean Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina **Vanja Gavran** congratulated 20th anniversary of Paneuropean organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He stated that there has been some progress on the European path of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the recent years. "There have been some new initiatives from the Great Britain and Germany, meetings in Berlin and Vienna, where Southeastern Europe has been a topic of the discussions, frequent visits of European Union representatives to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Association and Stabilization Agreement coming into effect. Clearly, there is a new approach that we asked for. Europe is in accordance, there is general political consensus that Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to become a part of the European Union." Gavran invited members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to visit together the places where Croats, Bosniacs and Serbs were killed during the war and pay their respect to the victims. "All the victims deserve this as well as all the people living in this suffering country. Let them be an example to others, to all political stakeholders, to start a catharsis and turn from being a Balkan-tavern politicians to being pro-European and pro-Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians in all their differences".

Honorary president of the Paneuropean Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina Msgr. PhD **Franjo Topić** remembered the year 1995 and the first efforts of founding the Paneuropean Union. "President of the International Paneuropean Union at that time, Archduke Otto von Habsburg, immediately after signing the Dayton Agreement sent his emissaries who held a founding assembly together with us on November 23 1995. Bosnia and Herzegovina has its problems, but there is still evident progress here. Some will say I am too much of an optimist, but we need to be aware that no pessimist has ever achieved anything significant in his life. Peace is not everything, but without peace, everything is nothing. For this reason, it is important for Bosnia and Herzegovina to become a part of NATO as soon as possible, as this is a guarantee that there will be no new conflicts here", said Topić in his speech among other things.

Alain Terrenoire, President of the International Paneuropean Union, in a very inspired speech stated that those who envisioned the Dayton Peace Agreement did not expect it to last 20 years. "It was not made to last all these years and I would like to see way less of the Dayton spirit in Bosnia and Herzegovina and way more of the Brussels spirit. I must say that there is not enough of Europe in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We need strong

Europe that exists for itself and for the others. If Europe was stronger, I do not think that Dayton would last this long. What is happening in Europe today is concerning. The stance we have towards refugees from the Middle East, who are our brothers, challenges the core values on which Europe was built. We are witnessing strengthening of the right-wing forces and populism in Europe; this is a dangerous world that we all need to fight against. I am especially thrilled that we are celebrating 20th anniversary of the Paneuropean Union in Mostar, a city that stands as a symbol of diversity and which experienced difficult moments during war".

A representative in the European Parliament **Tonino Picula** said that he would like to ask some questions about what Europe will be like in 20 years. "It is the fact that the European Union is changing, that it is no longer a kind of organization it used to be. European values are being lost. In that sense, we need to understand what kind of Europe Bosnia and Herzegovina is entering. Honestly, I am skeptical towards the new approach of European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am afraid that the initiatives of London and Berlin could end up being just attempts. At the same time, the situation in B&H is hard to change. We should not fool ourselves, changes to the Dayton Agreement would jeopardize positions of the politicians. We must not forget that opinion of Washington is important for all the processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it is the fact that the USA currently has no big interest in solving problems in this country", said Picula.

Dubravka Šuica, also a representative in the European Parliament, emphasized that everybody in Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to learn the value of agreement and consensus. "I am optimistic because B&H politicians are on the right path to change some things. Even today there are important party meetings in Mostar, which should produce important results. Bosnia and Herzegovina has only one way, way towards full membership in the European Union and there are no further question-marks there".

Many other representatives of Paneuropean organizations, experts and university professors talked at the conference as well, among them, Deputy High Representative **Ulrike Hartmann**, representative of the Chairman of the Presidency of B&H Dr. **Dejan Vanjek**, Vice-president of the Paneuropean Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina PhD **Mirko Pejanović**, member of the Presidency of the Paneuropean Union B&H PhD **Kasim Trnka**, Member of the Supervisory Board of the Paneuropean Union B&H PhD **Mile Lasić**, member of the Presidency of the Paneuropean Union B&H **Osman Topčagić**, Secretary General of the International Paneuropean Union and President of the Croatian Paneuropean Union PhD **Pavo Barišić**, representative in the House of Representatives of the Parliamentarian Assembly of B&H and member of the Disciplinary Court of the Paneuropean Union B&H Mag. **Senad Šepić**, Dean of the Tourism and Management College in Konjic PhD **Marijana Šećibović**, political analyst Mag. **Ivana Marić**, member of the Presidency of the International Paneuropean Union and Secretary General of the Paneuropean movement of Austria **Rainhard Kloucek**, Secretary General of Slovenian Paneuropean movement **Dean Hribar**, President of the Paneuropean Union of Serbia, PhD **Vojislav Mitić**, President of the Hungarian Paneuropean Union **Gábor Andrassy**, Vice-president of the Paneuropean Union of Bulgaria **Ivelina Popova** and editor of the magazine "Buka" **Aleksandar Trifunović** and others.

The Conference Agenda ends tomorrow with the Holy Mass in Mostar's cathedral at 10 a.m., celebrated by the Bishop of Mostar and Duvno Msgr. **Ratko Perić**.

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