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Department of Political Affairs - Security Council Affairs Division
Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Overview

During 2010 and 2011, the Security Council held six open meetings on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopting two resolutions. The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina briefed the Council four times during the period under review on the evolving political and security situation, as well as the current and future challenges facing the country. During these meetings the Security Council discussed the political situation and role of the High Representative, the European Union Force (EUFOR), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the country as mandated to ensure continued compliance with the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Agreement)¹ that had ended fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995.

The Council extended the authorization of the EUFOR and NATO presence, twice for periods of twelve months, including authorization for the participating Member States to take all necessary measures to assist both organizations in carrying out their missions.²

A table lists the meetings held in consideration of this agenda item, as well as related information, including resolutions adopted, invitees and speakers.

¹ [S/1995/999](#).

² Resolutions [1948 \(2010\)](#) and [2019 \(2011\)](#). For more information on the mandate of EUFOR, see part VIII, sect. III. A, with regard to regional peacekeeping operations.

May to November 2010: briefings by the High Representative

On 24 May 2010, the Council was briefed by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. He congratulated Bosnia and Herzegovina for its eighteen years of membership of the United Nations. In his statement he outlined the progress achieved so far, notably, steps towards Euro-Atlantic integration, an agreement with NATO on a membership action plan, the destruction of unsafe weapons and explosives left over from the war, progress on regional reconciliation and Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership on the Security Council. Pointing out the current and future challenges of the country, the High Representative expressed concern over attempts by the leadership of the Republika Srpska to hold a referendum that would seek to repudiate his authority, as well as decisions made under the Dayton Agreement. He further stated that the country remained afflicted by lack of a basic and fundamental consensus on what sort of country it should or could be - "whether a more centralized or a very decentralized State". The situation was exacerbated by a divided Government, a rise in the unemployment level, lack of constitutional reform and ethnic divisions. Referring to the October elections, he urged all parties to use their campaigns to create momentum for positive change. He called upon all parties to respect the Dayton Agreement and to foster a constructive atmosphere of reform. Finally, he praised the continuing commitment of the European Union in accompanying the country on the path to stability.³

In his statement, the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted the challenges and significant progress achieved during the eighteen years since Bosnia and Herzegovina had become a member of the United Nations, including its current status as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. At the same time he highlighted the lack of domestic progress on the "so-called entity voting mechanism" and the systemic violations of the Dayton Peace Agreement. He further called on the Security

³ [S/PV.6319](#), pp. 2-5.

Council to uphold the commitments of the Dayton Peace Agreement and to remain the guardian of peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entire region.⁴

Speaking on behalf of the European Union,⁵ Mr. Serrano highlighted the initiatives of EU in assisting the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including providing significant financial assistance and expertise. He reiterated the strong support of the European Union for the High Representative and called on all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to comply fully with decisions taken by the High Representative and to respect his authority.⁶

Many Council members shared the concerns raised by the High Representative in his report. The representative of the Russian Federation, however, stated that the report could not be recognized as “objective and balanced” and that it suffered from “overt anti-Serbian excesses”.⁷ Speakers welcomed the progress achieved by Bosnia and Herzegovina in the international and regional spheres, such as efforts towards Euro-Atlantic integration and accession to the NATO Membership Action Plan. They urged all parties in the country to strengthen internal dialogue and cooperation, in order to achieve genuine reconciliation and make further progress on police reform, internal unity and multi-ethnic stability. Most Council members also voiced support for international assistance to strengthen security and rule-of-law institutions, while calling on all leaders to exercise restraint during the October elections and refrain from anti-Dayton rhetoric.

On 11 November 2010, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina briefed the Security Council stating that the overall political picture in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained complex. There had been some positive developments, including visa-free travel for Bosnians within the Schengen area of the European Union, and progress in reconciliation with Serbia. However, he noted that there had been basically no progress in the past year regarding key reforms required for Euro-Atlantic integration and

⁴ Ibid., pp. 5-8.

⁵ The candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, the countries of Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia aligned themselves with this statement.

⁶ [S/PV.6319](#), pp. 22-24.

⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

NATO membership. He expressed regret that while there had been substantive progress in the first eleven years following the war, in the past four years there had been political stalemate and stagnation with the “fundamentals” of the country and its institutions being challenged on a regular basis. He added that there had been little progress in implementing the objectives and conditions for the transition or the closure of the Office of the High Representative, but indicated that the staffing level had been reduced. He further noted that the Bosnian election authorities had conducted the elections efficiently and international election observation missions had concluded that the elections had been in accordance with international standards.⁸ The Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina commented on the political and economic progress made since the signing of the Dayton Agreement fifteen years previously.⁹

The representative of Croatia noted that although Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina were the smallest and most vulnerable group, they should have equal rights to participate in the decision-making process, especially at the level of the Federation.¹⁰ Many speakers congratulated the Chairman on his re-election and welcomed the holding of free and fair elections, the European Union decision on visa-free travel, as well as the improvement in regional relationships. Council members called for the full implementation of the Dayton Agreement and condemned any divisive and anti-Dayton rhetoric, while encouraging the quick formation of new Governments at all levels. They expressed support for the extension of the mandate of the EUFOR and called for progress to be made in the transition from the Office of the High Representative to an European Union Special Representative.

November 2010 and 2011: decisions on the extension of the authorization of European Union-led multinational stabilization force

⁸ [S/PV.6421](#), pp. 2-5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

On 18 November 2010 the Security Council held a meeting on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹¹ The Council unanimously adopted resolution [1948 \(2010\)](#), by which it welcomed the increased turn-out and orderly conduct of the elections on 3 October 2010 and the European Union decision to grant visa-free entry to citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter the Council renewed the authorization for European Union-led multinational stabilization force (EUFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a further period of twelve months.

On 16 November 2011, the Council unanimously adopted resolution [2019 \(2011\)](#),¹² by which it called on political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to fulfil their democratic responsibility and form a new Council of Ministers, refrain from divisive rhetoric and make further concrete and tangible progress towards European Union integration. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the Council authorized a further 12-month extension of EUFOR. In addition, the Council welcomed the decision of NATO to continue to maintain a presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

May to November 2011: briefings by the High Representative

On 9 May 2011, the Council was briefed by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina who expressed concern at the decision taken by the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska to hold a referendum on central judicial institutions which was in violation of the Dayton Agreement. The High Representative noted that seven months after the general elections, the overall political situation in the country still remained unsatisfactory, preventing the formation of a Government at the State level. He further stated that no progress had been made since his previous report on completion of the five objectives and two conditions (5+2 agenda) that would permit the closure of the Office of the High Representative. At the same time he observed that the need for an international presence with an executive mandate in Bosnia and Herzegovina was still evident. He

¹¹ [S/PV.6426](#).

¹² [S/PV.6661](#).

urged the international community to address seriously the deteriorating situation in order to enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to solve its problems institutionally and move towards full Euro-Atlantic integration.¹³

The representative of the Russian Federation stated that the continuing arbitrary use of the Bonn powers by the High Representative was unacceptable and that the decision taken by the Parliament of Republika Srpska to hold a referendum on the legitimacy of the actions taken by the High Representative was not a direct violation of the Dayton Agreement.¹⁴ Other speakers shared the High Representative's concern about the proposal for a referendum. They urged all parties to engage in constructive dialogue in order to achieve genuine reconciliation and pave the way towards the Euro-Atlantic integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁵

On 15 November 2011, the High Representative briefed the Council and stated that political stagnation and instability, as well as challenges to the Dayton Agreement, had continued during the reporting period. One year following the general elections, the State-level budget had not been passed and the Council of Ministers had yet to be established. He reiterated his recommendation that the Office of the High Representative, as well as EUFOR, should remain operational. However, he noted that the Serbian and Croatian Presidents had continued their policies of positive engagement, resulting in a better regional situation than at any other point since the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁶

Describing the situation in his country as “complex but not un-resolvable”, the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina stated that, given a positive security environment, and with the 2011 economic data showing some signs of improvements, there was a way to overcome the current situation.¹⁷ The representative of the Russian Federation maintained his belief that any decision critical to the future of Bosnia and

¹³ [S/PV.6529](#), pp. 2-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10 (United Kingdom); pp. 10-11 (Germany); and pp. 11-12 (Portugal).

¹⁶ [S/PV.6659](#), pp. 2-5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

Herzegovina should be taken by the Bosnian people themselves, with broad agreement among the three constituent peoples namely Bosnians, Serbs and Croatsians.¹⁸ To that end, the representative of Serbia opined that the international community should embark on the process of closing the Office of the High Representative.¹⁹ Speaking on behalf of the European Union, Mr. Mayr-Harting elaborated on efforts to strengthen its engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, he stated that the European Union had enhanced its political presence with the appointment of a new representative to oversee European Union-related matters in Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁰ Most speakers expressed their support for the extension of the mandate of EUFOR for another term.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

Meetings: the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against- abstaining)</i>
6319 24 May 2010	Letter dated 14 May 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2010/235)		Croatia, Republic of Serbia	High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations	All Council members and all invitees	
6421 11 November 2010	Letter dated 8 November 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2010/575)		Croatia, the Republic of Serbia	High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina	All Council members and all invitees	
6426 18 November 2010	Letter dated 8 November 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2010/575)	Draft resolution submitted by Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Russian Federation, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States (S/2010/582)	Germany, Italy			Resolution 1948 (2010) 15-0-0
6529 9 May 2011	Letter dated 3 May 2011 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2011/283)		Croatia, Republic of Serbia, Turkey	High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Acting Head of the Delegation of the European Union	All Council members and all invitees	
6659 15 November 2011	Letter dated 3 November 2011 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2011/682)		Croatia, Republic of Serbia	High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Head of the Delegation of the European Union	All Council members and all invitees	
6661 16 November 2011	Letter dated 3 November 2011 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2011/682) Letter dated 15 November 2011 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2011/717)	Draft resolution submitted by France, Germany, Italy, Nigeria, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain,	Italy, Spain			Resolution 2019 (2011) 15-0-0

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
		United Kingdom, United States (S/2011/713)				
