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Statement

by

His Excellency Mr. Sulejman Tihić,

Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

at the General Debate of

the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations

New York, 22 September 2004

**Address by the Chairman of Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency
Mr. SULEJMAN TIHI**

New York, September 22, 2004.

***Mr. President, Secretary General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

I am greeting all of you, expressing my great pleasure for having an opportunity to address this eminent meeting.

Once again, thank to the UN for everything it has done so far and is doing for my country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multiethnic country, where Bosnian Muslims, Serb-Orthodoxies, Croat Catholics, Jews and many other ethnicities used to live in peace and tolerance for hundreds of years. In Sarajevo, but also the most of other Bosnian towns, one can find the mosques, Orthodox and Catholic churches, but the Jewish temples as well standing by each others for hundreds of years. For that reason, Sarajevo is also called the Jerusalem of Europe. BH ethnic groups are used to live with each other, in mutual understanding and tolerance.

Preserving the multiethnic structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina with all its characteristics and diversities not only Europe, but also the whole world, are passing through the historic exam. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the biggest world cultures and religions meeting-point. It is therefore a denial of the clashes of civilization theories.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to inform you about the situation in my country, which has achieved a significant progress during the past 9 years.

The infrastructure destroyed in the war is reconstructed and the macroeconomic stability achieved with the 1% inflation only. Banking system has been consolidated and the foreign debts are regularly being paid of. Compared to the post-war period, the GDP increased for 3 times, and national reserves increased for 14 times. The foreign currency reserves and savings are constantly increasing as well. We are on the right path to meet all the requirements for starting negotiations with the EU on the stabilization and association agreement. Due to the RS entity's failure to cooperate with the ICTY, we could not to access the ***Partnership for Peace*** program membership although we met all other requirements.

There are the strong reforms underway in regard of the education, customs, taxies, security and defense system. Many new central institutions are set up, like the Defense and Security Ministry, Intelligence Service, The BH Joint Military Command etc. From about 5 hundred thousand soldiers of the three separate armies in 1995, now the BH Military Forces have 12 thousand soldiers. NATO had some 70 hundred soldiers in BH in 1996, and the SFOR now has about 7 thousand. The security situation is stabile and the peace was never broken. Since the Dayton Peace Accords were signed by now, not a single foreign soldier was ever killed. Instead of the international aid consumer, Bosnia and Herzegovina is becoming more and more participant of the international peace missions, like Congo, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Liberia, East Timor, Hiatus, etc.

The common foreign, security and defense politics of European Union enabled it to take the leading role in Bosnia and Herzegovina now. By the end of this year, the EUFOR will take over from the SFOR in BH.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The positive processes of stabilization as well as the overall progress not only in BH, but also in the other countries created after the SFRY dissolution, is being slowed down due to the fact of an inappropriate attitude towards the war crime and war criminals. A part of public and political officials are trying to an excuse for war crimes saying that they were done in the vital ethnic interests' protection. The war criminals however are treated the national heroes. That has to be changed! Only on the basis of the truth and justice we can build the confidence and reconciliation amongst the peoples as well as the friendly relations between our respective countries. The International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia has got an irreplaceable role in this process. We therefore highly appreciate its work so far and we think it has to accomplish the trials that started already, particularly those against the highest-level officials. A part of the cases that are not completed yet can only be transferred to the courts of countries where the crimes have happened. That can be done only once these countries will be prepared to guarantee the fair and correct trials.

The full cooperation with the ICTY has to be unavoidable requirement for the accession to the Euro-Atlantic institutions. And only that! It is not enough to arrest and prosecute the ICTY's list war criminals only. It is necessary that local courts in our respective countries to prosecute thousands of the other war criminals who are still at large. These criminals are still at large and they are the destabilizing factor and the obstacle to the positive processes, very often connected with the organized crime.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are to establish the BH Court's Chamber for War Crimes. This very Chamber will take over some of The Hague Tribunal's cases, but also to prosecute many other criminals. That is going to be The Hague in small. We will therefore need the technical and financial support, but we also have to involve the international judges and prosecutors who have experience in such the trials, above all those who worked for The Hague Tribunal.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year, it will be the anniversary of the genocide against Bosnian Muslims in the UN Safe Heaven Srebrenica and Žepa. The most responsible people for this, but also all other war crimes that have happened in Bosnia and Herzegovina, **Radovan Karadžić** and **Ratko Mladić** are not arrested so far. These two, however, are responsible for about the two hundred thousand people's death. From this very place, I am therefore calling up to the all people in charge to arrest them

The outstanding issue of about 15 thousand missing persons, whose bodies are spread through the numerous mass graves throughout the country (**320 mass graves found so far!**) makes a big problem to Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. We therefore need a help in both — finding the missing ones and identifying those already found whose bodies are laying the mortuaries still waiting to be identified.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The political system set up by the Dayton and Washington Agreement did play a positive role in setting up the peace, reconstruction, progress and the Bosnia and Herzegovina stabilization & integration. They are now, however, more and more becoming an obstacle to the further development and progress. The current administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a Federation composed of 10 cantons, a Republic and a District, the strong entities and a weak state, is an obstacle on our way towards the Euro-Atlantic integrations. It is an extremely complicated and expensive system that can hardly operate. The people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but outside as well, are more or less aware of this fact.

I believe that the time is coming when the domestic political representatives will start to discuss the reconstruction of BH constitution and its' compliance with the international conventions, particularly the European Convention on Human Rights and Freedom. We have to create an efficient state with the institutions and charges that will enable us to become the EU and NATO full member. I hope that we will get the support and help of the friendly countries and international community. A good opportunity to do so is next year, on the Dayton Peace Accords' 10th anniversary. It is time therefore for BH to turn from the Dayton, to the Brussels phase.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bosnia and Herzegovina is sincerely and firmly committed to strengthen the friendly relations with neighboring Republic of Croatia and State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on the basis of mutual respect to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and equality. Our geographic positions, history, ethnic structure of the population, economic and infrastructural connection, are directing us towards the overall cooperation. We are aware of the fact that without resolution of disputable issues, we can not go on further to the Euro-Atlantic integrations and we already achieved some progress in this regard so far.

The South-Eastern Europe countries made the huge individual and common efforts to achieve the great progress in order to change the stereotype about the region as a backward, problematic and conflict region of the European suburb. The regional co-operation is promoted in aspects of defense, security, borders' control, free market, visa regime, combating the corruption, organized crime and ethnic and religious minorities' protection etc.

The issue of the borders in the region must not be and can not be open again. These relations we have to arrange in compliance with the European standards of the individual and collective rights, but not on the principles of domination. However, we have to open the issue of collaboration over the borders since it is our common interest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think that Iraqi crisis needs to be resolved simultaneously with the Palestinian issue. We therefore support the Initiative of Four and The Road Map which is a basis for setting up the sincere dialogue between Israel and Palestine, with the USA mediation. We also strongly condemn each terrorist act as well as the execution of the Palestinian religious leaders without the Court trials. We are also strongly condemning the construction of the so called *protection wall* by the Israeli side.

We are happy with the Security Council members' consensus in regard of transfer of Coalition forces' sovereignty to the legitimate elected legal and executive authorities in Iraq. We think that the UN should take the leading role in shaping the future of Iraq. The Iraqi people need to govern their country and the military forces that control the territory must respect the Geneva conventions on the humanitarian law. The territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq must be preserved, including the sovereignty over the natural resources. We are calling on protection of the Iraqi world civilization heritage and the holly places in Iraq, just like **Kerbela** and **Imam Ali's Mosque** in Najaf. Aiming to help the people of Iraq and contribute to set up the peace over there, Bosnia and Herzegovina decided to send to Iraq a unit destroy the mines and unexploded devices.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bosnia and Herzegovina is sincerely committed to combat the international terrorism and is the active participant in the International Antiterrorist Coalition. Terrorism is not only the threat to peace and security, but we also find it immoral and counterproductive. Immoral because the innocent people are killed and counterproductive because terrorism can not resolve any problem, it just can produce a new one. In that regard, I would like to stress the example of Bosnian Muslims here since we were the biggest victims during the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995. We managed to defend ourselves but we never stretch out for the revenge or terrorism ever during the aggression, but also after that.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to review the UN Security Council reform and issue of increasing the UN mechanism efficiency strengthening.

By their own experience, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina do know what does the lack proper and efficient action of the United Nations mean. If the UN mechanisms were more efficient, the aggression against BH would not happen or, at least, the war could not take that long time. If so, then the genocide would not be committed in the UN Safe Heaven of Srebrenica and Žepa. This is also a right moment to remind all of us on the UN's obligation to support the survivors of this area.

Taking into the consideration the entire modern world, there comes a question of an efficient security and cooperation, The Security Council needs to be the leading factor of peace and stability in the world. It has to operate the efficient speed action mechanisms in order to prevent the conflicts to turn to military clashes.

In order to achieve better the Security Council's better representation and efficiency, we are supporting the initiatives to enlarge the SC.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to become the Security Council non-permanent member. When it comes to its' efficiency, we have mostly bad experience with it. By our participation in it's' work, we would like to prevent that to repeat anywhere throughout the world. We are therefore now confirming our intention to be the candidate within the 2010-2011 mandate. Bosnia and Herzegovina deserves that and we will prove it.

Thank you.