

**Security Council Open Meeting on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security**  
**Thursday, 23 September 2010**

***Statement by Ambassador H.E. Mr. Haris Silajdžić, Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations***

I would like to thank you, President Gül, and the delegation of the Republic of Turkey for convening this high level meeting in order to make a strategic review of the Security Council's growing role in the maintenance of international peace and security. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his excellent presentation. I sincerely hope that the outcome of our meeting today will serve as a useful tool for future Security Council deliberations.

The primary role of the Security Council under the United Nations Charter is to maintain international peace and security. We should live up to expectations and send a unanimous message today that we commit ourselves to developing the means to fulfill this responsibility.

Coming from the perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I cannot stress enough how crucial it is that the lessons learned in the past are applied appropriately. The Security Council has erred in the past, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most illustrative example of that in modern history. By imposing and maintaining the arms embargo on Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Security Council added to the overwhelming military advantage of Milošević's regime, which intended to expand his country's territories, at the expense of the surrounding States, through genocide and ethnic cleansing, regardless of human cost.

As a result, according to the data from the International Committee of the Red Cross, 200,000 people were killed, 12,000 of them children, up to 50,000 women were raped, and 2.2 million were forced to flee their homes. May I also remind the Council that 1,350,000 citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina still live outside the country as a consequence.

At the time, some powerful members of this Council justified that course by arguing that the lifting of the embargo would add oil to the fire. The result was that the fire was essentially quelled with the blood of the innocent.

And then the horrors culminated in the genocide that was committed in Srebrenica in July 1995. In fact, the Secretary-General's report on Srebrenica from 1999 unequivocally admitted: "Through error, misjudgement and an inability to recognize the scope of the evil confronting us, we failed to do our part to help save the people of Srebrenica from the Serb campaign of mass murder ... Srebrenica crystallised a truth understood only too late by the United Nations and the world at large: that Bosnia was as much a moral cause as a military conflict. The tragedy of Srebrenica will haunt our history forever." (A/54/549, para. 503)

We cannot bring back the dead, but we can give dignity and justice to the survivors. What we say today is not aimed at the past, but at the future. We owe it not only to the victims and survivors, but to our own common humanity. The message that the Security Council sends to the would-be perpetrators of crimes in the name of twisted ideologies must be crystal clear: "your crimes will not pay off".

The errors that were made in Bosnia and Herzegovina have hardly been corrected. To the contrary, the peace and security established by the Dayton Agreement and the progress made in many fields are now destabilized by open calls for secession of one part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This destabilizing rhetoric was preceded by the testing of the international community's patience for the last 15 years. Inadequate responses to the constant blocking of State institutions, return of refugees and provocative rhetoric have been tolerated long enough for the perpetrators to believe that the time has come to turn the territories where they committed atrocities, ethnic cleansing and genocide into their own fiefdom. That is a threat not only to the peace, security and stability in which the international community invested so much, but also a test of the international community's resolve to prevent the escalation and the opening of fresh wounds in my country.

It would be a repetition of the mistake to dismiss open calls for changing international borders as election campaign rhetoric. Our ability to prevent is tested once more. As President John F. Kennedy once rightly said, "an error does not become a mistake until you refuse to correct it".

I would also like to say a few words about postconflict peacebuilding operations. Although all relevant national and international actors should be involved in the process, we consider the political will of the host country and national ownership to be sine qua non conditions for the success of peacebuilding operations. The peacebuilding process is primarily the national responsibility of post-conflict countries.

Promotion of dialogue between the parties to a conflict, particularly between decision makers and civil society, is critical for national institutions' capacity and confidence-building and for the reconciliation process. Holding all those who committed crimes accountable and bringing them to justice is of crucial importance to the reconciliation process.

Another unpleasant reminder is in order here: Ratko Mladić, the chief executioner of the genocide in Srebrenica, is still at large. That does not bode well for prevention and our credibility.

Peacebuilding operations should be based on an integrated approach that includes establishment of good governance, rule of law, promotion of human rights, institution-building, security sector reform, economic reconstruction and development, and full reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons. Furthermore, the role of women and their involvement in peacebuilding efforts should be strengthened in post-conflict societies.

In our increasingly interconnected world, the issues of peace and security are inseparable. New threats and challenges emerge on a daily basis. No country can isolate itself from them or tackle them individually. The Security Council therefore must be prepared to deal with challenges in a coherent, comprehensive and just way. The Security Council must meet the expectations and fulfill the hopes of millions of those in need throughout the world. They expect nothing less from us.