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**Remarks to the press
by
Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP
during his visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina together with
Joseph R. BIDEN, Vice President of the United States of America**

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and Joseph R. BIDEN, Vice President of the United States of America, visited Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on 19-20 May 2009.

The joint trip by Mr Solana and Vice President Biden provided an opportunity to reiterate the EU and US common objectives in BiH and support the country's efforts to progress on the path towards EU and Euro-Atlantic institutions. The two leaders met the Bosnian members of the Presidency, the Prime Minister, the leaders of the Parliament and the political party leaders. They urged the leaders of BiH to transcend nationalist agendas and individual interest and work responsibly together for the future of the country.

The following remarks were made by EU High Representative Solana:

"Today has been a very important day for BiH.

We discussed the evolution of your country. First, the direction that would bring the country closer to the European Union and, secondly, which is related to the first issue, the lack of common action by the leaders in formulating clear positions and trying to solve the problems of the country.

The aim of today's joint visit - from Vice President Biden of the United States and myself from the European Union - has been to have a clear discussion with the leaders of the country to see, on the one hand, how we could help, and, on the other, to tell them what we think they should do to overcome the current situation. The visit has been a success on both counts.

I believe that we are going to see more activity in the future, on the political side a better understanding among the different leaders, and a better relationship with the key countries of the International Community that during many, many years have been helping your country.

We met with the members of the Presidency, the eight leaders of the different political parties, the Prime Minister, the leaders of the Parliament - overall, a very complete schedule. Over the last weeks, I have also received many important leaders in Brussels on different occasions, one by one, in order to prepare for this visit today.

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As a result it has been a successful trip and I hope there will be consequences, as good as possible for your country. At the end of the day, that is what the citizens of BiH will care about. We would like to say to the people here, to the citizens of BiH, that the friends that were with you in times of difficult continue to be with you in these times of hope.

I am more optimistic after these meetings. I look forward to a better future for BiH. The discussions today have made clear the position of the International Community, and we have understood some of the problems that the leadership has here. I believe that this debate can have a positive outcome.

As to the pledges, they are very clear. As you know, there are five objectives and two conditions that have to be fulfilled by the authorities in BiH so that the country can continue moving forward. This has been the policy of the European Union and the policy of the United States - as you have seen today, those policies are the same. In order to be able to move from a phase defined by the International High Representative to a phase where the proximity to Europe will be dominant, there will be a transition towards the EU Special Representative. That will not happen tomorrow, but this is the way in which we are going to be moving. Our commitment towards this aim is clear, and in a short period of time the mechanisms to assist these changes will be in place.

We have also spoken also about potential constitutional changes. As you know, this is a very difficult issue that cannot be resolved in 24 hours, but I think that the direction, the manner and the geometry of how these changes to the constitution can be done is, as I said, not an issue for tomorrow, but if possible it should be addressed before the elections in 2010. If everything cannot be done at once, at least some basic elements should be tackled, which will produce changes in the structure of power, in the structure of government, and make the country much more functional.

Do not forget that we are in a difficult moment. Not only you. The whole world. We are in a very deep economic crisis. Therefore, efficient governments – governments that can take decisions rapidly – are useful for everybody, in particular for the people of the country".

Before the meetings with the Bosnian leaders together with Vice President Biden, Mr Solana visited the EUFOR ALTHEA mission at its headquarters in Camp Butmir where he met the Deputy Commander of EUFOR, Brigadier General José Carrasco Gabaldón. The EU High Representative used this occasion to show support for the positive contribution of the force to the safe and secure environment in BiH. The visit took place in the context of the ongoing planning for a possible future evolution of the mission. At Camp Butmir, Mr Solana made the following remarks:

"I am happy to see today how the situation in BiH evolves in a positive direction. But as you know there are still things that need to be done. I think that from a security point of view the situation is way much better and as you know the possibility of getting your country closer to the European Union is also getting better. Though I do get very sad sometimes when I see some of the nationalistic rhetoric coming back."

On Wednesday, 20 May 2009, the EU High Representative visited the EU Police Mission (EUPM) in Bosnia and Herzegovina where he met Commissioner Stefan Feller, Head of the EU Police Mission and EUPM staff. He was briefed about the security situation in BiH and the achievements of the mission in implementing its mandate, particularly in the light of the current planning for a reinforced EU engagement in BiH. The EUPM is the first mission launched under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and was launched in 2003.

"This visit to EUPM is a very special visit for me. EUPM is a very important Mission for BiH and their professional work and engagement are well known and acknowledged by everybody. I assure people of BiH that we will continue to work with your security structures.

Yesterday we had an important meeting with the US Vice-President and the political leadership of BiH. We sent a very clear message on how to move the country towards the EU. There is no doubt that the role of the police of BiH, in that process, in cooperation with EUPM, will be fundamental", said Solana to the press following his visit to the EUPM.
