

**SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE DEFENSE MINISTERIAL
MEETING OF MINISTERS OF DEFENSE
OCTOBER 22, 2007
KIEV, UKRAINE**

**ADDRESS BY MR. SELMO CIKOTIĆ, MA
MINISTER OF DEFENSE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

MINISTER GRYTSENKO,

YOUR EXCELLENCIES:

FIRST AND FOREMOST, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IS EXTREMELY HONORED TO BE EXTENDED THE OFFICIAL STATUS OF A FULL-FLEDGED MEMBER STATE IN THE SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE DEFENSE MINISTERIAL (SEDM). WITH THE UTMOST GRATITUDE, OUR COUNTRY EXPRESSES ITS DEEPEST APPRECIATION TO THE MEMBERS FOR YOUR DEMONSTRATED CONFIDENCE, TRUST AND YOUR CONTINUED, COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO OUR COUNTRY. WE TRULY VALUE AND EMBRACE THE "INITIATIVE'S" PRINCIPLES, WHICH CLEARLY LINK OUR COUNTRY AND ITS ASPIRATIONS TO OUR MUTUAL NEEDS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY, REGIONAL STABILITY AND PEACEFUL, COUNTRY-TO-COUNTRY RELATIONSHIPS, ESPECIALLY IN THE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT AREA OF DEFENSE REFORM AND DEFENSE COOPERATION. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO ALL SEDM MEMBER STATES FOR BEING WITH US ON OUR PATH FROM GUEST, TO OBSERVER, UP TO ACHIEVING FULL MEMBERSHIP IN THE ORGANIZATION.

WE SEE REGIONAL COOPERATION NOT ONLY A TOOL FOR ENHANCING REGIONAL SECURITY AND STABILITY, BUT ALSO, THROUGH SYNERGY EFFECT, AN INSTRUMENT FOR WIDENING ZONE OF STABILITY FAR BEHIND THE REGIONAL FRAMES AND FOR STRENGTHENING EACH REGIONAL ASPIRANT COUNTRY'S CANDIDACY FOR JOINING EURO ATLANTIC INTEGRATION STRUCTURES.

THE U.S. HAS A UNIQUE ROLE AND A UNIQUE CAPABILITY IN THE EURO-ATLANTIC ARENA AND HAS PROVEN ITS WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO PROVIDE AN EXTRA BOOST TO THOSE COUNTRIES THAT HAVE SHOWN THE DESIRE AND COMMITMENT TO JOIN THE COMMUNITY. BIH, AS A NEW AND FULLY COMMITTED PARTNER LOOKS FORWARD TO WORKING WITH ITS REGIONAL PARTNERS AND WITH THE U.S. ON ITS PATH TO NATO MEMBERSHIP.

IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMS NEEDED TO SUPPORT OUR STRIVING TOWARDS EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION, THROUGH BILATERAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION, IS A PATH WITH NO ALTERNATIVE FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.

TWO WEEKS AGO WE HAD FORMAL INAUGURATION OF SECRETARIAT OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL IN SARAJEVO, THUS MAKING OUR CAPITAL SORT OF INFORMAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONAL CENTER.

I AM PLEASED AND PROUD TO REPORT THAT SINCE THE LAST SEDM MINISTERIAL MEETING IN TIRANA, IN WHICH BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA HAS BEEN EXTENDED OBSERVER STATUS BIH MADE GREAT STRIDES ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF NATIONAL REFORMS.

IN THE AREA OF DEFENSE, WE ARE IN A FINAL STAGE OF ESTABLISHING AND MAKING FULLY FUNCTIONAL DEFENSE INSTITUTIONS, COMMANDS AND UNITS OF THE ARMED FORCES, AS PER THE PRESIDENTIAL DECISION ON THE SIZE AND STRUCTURE OF THE ARMED FORCES OF JULY LAST YEAR. ALL ELEMENTS OF THE NEW ARMED FORCES STRUCTURE WILL BE ESTABLISHED BY THE END OF NEXT MONTH.

AS A RESULT OF THE ONGOING ARMED FORCES RESTRUCTURING PROCESS, SOME 2,5 THOUSAND OF MILITARY PROFESSIONALS AND CIVILIANS WERE LAID OFF THIS YEAR.

THANKS TO GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS FOR FAVORABLE RETIREMENT AND THE NATO TRUST FUND, THIS DOWNSIZING PROCESS WAS FINISHED WITHOUT MAJOR DIFFICULTIES.

LET ME TAKE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK NATO AND ALL MEMBER STATES PARTICIPATING IN NATO TRUST FUND, FOR THE PROGRAM SPECIALLY DESIGNED TO MITIGATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE DOWNSIZING PROCESS.

THE SIXTH HALF A YEAR ROTATION OF OUR EOD UNIT IS ON DEPLOYMENT ENSURING OUR CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN THE COALITION FORCES OPERATION IN IRAQ, AS WELL AS TWO UN MONITORING MISSIONS IN ETHIOPIA AND CONGO.

WE KNOW VERY WELL THAT THE CURRENT LEVEL OF OUR ENGAGEMENT IS A MODEST CONTRIBUTION TO A STANDING INCREASE OF REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS, AIMED TO PRESERVE THE WORLD'S PEACE AND STABILITY.

HOWEVER, IN NEXT WEEKS THE BIH PRESIDENCY MIGHT CONSIDER GRADUAL INCREASE OF OUR PSO CONTRIBUTION, WHICH WILL BE COMMENSURATE WITH ALL THE DYNAMICS OF OUR EARLIER-MENTIONED TRANSFORMATION AGENDA AND QUITE LIMITED RESOURCES.

AFTER LESS THAN A YEAR OF PARTICIPATION IN PFP, WE ARE WELL UNDERWAY IN IMPLEMENTING OUR FIRST IPP WITH NATO, AND SINCE JUNE BIH PARTICIPATES IN PARP PROGRAM.

THROUGH PARP WE INTEND TO IDENTIFY FORCE ELEMENTS AS OUR SPECIAL NICHE CAPABILITY, IN ADDITION TO EOD. WE WILL CAREFULLY CONSIDER OUR POSSIBILITIES TO ASSUME A ROLE IN THE MULTINATIONAL PEACE FORCE SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE.

OUR INTENT IS TO EMBARK UPON IPAP PROGRAM SOON, AIMING AT FURTHER ENLARGEMENT OF OUR COOPERATION WITH THE ALLIANCE TO AREAS BEHIND MILITARY AND DEFENSE.

IN CLOSING, AGAIN, PLEASE ACCEPT OUR GRATEFULNESS FOR AGREEING TO ALLOW BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TO BECOME A FULL MEMBER WITHIN THE "INITIATIVE." AND ON BEHALF OF THE BIH GOVERNMENT, I WISH TO THANK THE UKRAINIAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE GRUTSENKO AND HIS STAFF FOR GRACIOUSLY AND PROFESSIONALLY HOSTING THIS IMPORTANT EVENT, WITH SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS FOR UKRAINIAN ACCESSION TO THE MPFSEE.

THANK YOU.