

**ADRIATIC – BALTIC – ATLANTIC MEETING OF  
MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MINISTERS OF DEFENSE  
OCTOBER 12-13, 2007  
SPLIT, CROATIA**

**ADDRESS BY MRS. MARINA PENDEŠ,  
DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENSE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

Minister Rončević,  
Honorable Ministers,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honor to address, the US Adriatic Charter, US Baltic Charter and the new PfP Member States Defense Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs at this meeting.

I am proud and privileged to be here representing BiH, one of the new members of the Partnership for Peace. I welcome the initiative for meeting in this format, since US Adriatic Charter and US Baltic Charter States, as well as the three new PfP Member States, with all their specifics still have so much in common. At least, shearing same values and principles and, although in various stages of completion, either full-fledged members or striving towards Euro –Atlantic integration processes.

Regionally based, U.S. sponsored charters have proven to be effective ways to assist and facilitate the countries involved to progress toward the goals of Euro-Atlantic integration.

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 partners and with the U.S. on its path to NATO membership.

The three Baltic States constitute a prime example how neighbors and friends can work together towards achieving common goals. Despite geographical distances, Bosnia and Herzegovina has benefited a lot from some specific regional projects the Baltic countries have been implementing, including Baltic Defense Colleague, in Tartu, Estonia. With generous sponsorship provided by the Swiss Government, throughout past years dozens of young officers of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina were given three state of the art training program on staff and commanding knowledge and skills.

On the other side, with due respect and consideration we witness great strides the three Adriatic charter Regional Friends, the MAP countries have been making towards full fledged membership. Successes of Albania, Croatia and Macedonia on their path towards NATO we see not only a source of inspiration for our reform processes, but also an opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina and remaining non NATO countries of the Region to give our own contribution to once for ever change perception of South East Europe as an area of instability.

With the utmost gratitude, our country expresses its deepest appreciation to the US A-3 and B-3 members for your demonstrated confidence and your continued, collective and individual support and assistance to our country. We truly value and embrace these regional initiative's principles, which clearly link my 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 see regional cooperation not only a tool for enhancing regional security and stability, but also, through synergy effect, an instrument for strengthening credibility of each regional country's aspiration for joining Euro Atlantic Integration structures.

I believe that some of the functioning principles of the Baltic Defense Colleague could serve a good pattern for implementing certain training and education programs in our Region. Specifically the Peace Support Operations Training Center at Butmir near by Sarajevo, as center established and founded by group of 12 international partners and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in consultations with all partners, we would like to become genuine regional center. Not only with regional student body, but also regional composition of the directing staff, steering competencies as well as funding.

In similar fashion, we are ready to take part in other regional training and education projects organized on principles of regional ownership.

Let me now spend a couple of minutes familiarizing you with the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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.

Last week we had formal inauguration of Secretariat of the Regional Cooperation Council in Sarajevo, thus making our capital sort of informal administrative regional center.

We are about to finalize the process of formally acceding to SEEDM and the formal decision of acceptance of BiH to the Organization is due to take place at the forthcoming SEDM Meeting in Kiev, latter this month

Last year Bosnia and Herzegovina opened negotiations on our Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. Although, technical part of negotiations was smooth and efficient, certain delay in the process is caused by lack of political consensus in BiH on Police reform modalities. Overcoming these obstacles will create new framework for co-operation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union.

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.

We keep on with our concrete actions to change the perception of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country that consumes security to a country that actively contributes to regional and wider stability and security.

The sixth six-month 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 the 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 well underway in implementing our first IPP with NATO which we are going to revise and update next weeks.

Since June BiH participates in PARP program, and the first PARP Assessment is being finalized by NATO experts as well as Partnership Goals, which are already drafted and preliminary agreed at expert level.

Our intent is to embark upon IPAP program soon, aiming at further enlargement of our cooperation with the Alliance to areas behind defense and security.

Just next week, BiH will organize IPAP workshop at which, beside BiH participants and NATO experts, we anticipate participants from the neighboring countries.

It is our firm belief that, as a member of the Partnership for Peace, Bosnia & Herzegovina can work with other PfP and NATO member states to refine and effectively implement all our reforms and continue our road to full NATO membership. Regional cooperation remains most instrumental for achieving those goals.

Let me conclude thanking cordially Croatian hosts for organizing this event and we are looking forward to our mutually beneficiary cooperation.

Thank you.