



Statement by

H.E. Tomislav Leko, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the
OSCE on the Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina,
to the 984th Meeting of the Permanent Council

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The delegation of BiH takes note of the statements of EU (and those countries that have aligned to), U.S., Canada, R.F. and Romania and information given by Secretary General and C-i-O and expresses appreciation for their intention to address the situation in BiH and to assist in the aftermath of the significant public protests. In this vain, BiH also appreciates the words of support by the European and U.S. officials, who recently visited our country and have generously offered assistance to finding of feasible solutions for improvement of the conditions in BiH.

The protests, highlighting economical, social and political difficulties in the country, have started in the city of Tuzla, at the north-east of the country, with the large number of workers from the companies that have collapsed during the privatization process. The protests have taken place in front of judicial institutions as the disgruntled workers have been requesting the judiciary to press the charges against the owners of the privatized companies and to ensure payment of their wages. The protests have escalated on Friday, February 7, and have spread to the other big cities in BiH, mainly across the entity of the Federation of BiH, including Bihac, Mostar, Sarajevo and Zenica. The protesters caused the governments of the four cantons to resign (Tuzla, Zenica, Bihac and Sarajevo). In the wake of the protests, as protests started substantially to reduce, the civic initiatives, called a “citizens’ plenums” started to emerge, in a kind of the protesters’ attempts to articulate their requirements against the authorities.

Unfortunately, among the peaceful protesters interfered the groupings of hooligans who misused the citizens’ right to demonstrate peacefully and lawfully. They have attacked the public and governmental institutions as well as law enforcement authorities, who have tried to restore the public order and to protect the property using the minimum of force. Regrettably, in violent attacks on the public institutions, the number of public and governmental facilities were damaged and set on fire (like the cantonal governmental institutions, Archives of BiH and the Presidency of BiH), with the number of injured persons among protesters and, mainly, the law enforcement officers. It is with the great luck that those injured are out of a life danger and that there were no human casualties.

In their first statement after the violent protests on February 7, the members of the Presidency of BiH have voiced their understanding over the bitterness of the citizens with the difficult social situation and have called the citizens to refrain from violence, while condemning the hooligans’ excesses and urging for the stabilization of the situation.



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In addition, we would like to express our appreciation for the activities of the OSCE, through its Mission office and the recent visit of the C-i-O Special Representative for the W.B., and its active involvement to calming down the situation and mediating the ways to a constructive dialogue between government leaders and citizens, as the basis for a progress and effective and sustainable solutions.

We highly value the efforts of EU and its officials. The recent visit of EU Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy Commissioner, Mr. Stefan Fuele to BiH and his talks with officials and representatives of civil society organizations is a clear signal of the European perspective for BiH.

Although the talks on the implementation of the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the “Sejdic and Finci” case were not successful, some other signals and proposals are very encouraging and in line with the principal economical needs of the country. These refers to the EU Commission focus on better economic governance, with assistance to BiH to prepare a National Economic Reform Programme and a Competitiveness and Growth Programme, both envisaged to push forward reforms on labour market with the improved co-ordination on economic and fiscal policies, bolstering investments, growth and employment. There is also a plan for the acceleration of the implementation of EU funded projects. Finally, there is reference to the Chapter 23 of EU acquis, and particularly the fight on anti-corruption. The fight against corruption is one of the main claims of the citizens. The Government of the Federation of BiH has already prepared the set of the anti-corruption laws designated to fight corruption more efficiently and to enhance the judicial capacities to deal with the corruption cases.

Implementation of the aforementioned is inextricably linked with the requirements and expectations of BiH citizens.

Thank you.