



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brian Aggeler

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 21, 2024

Ambassador Aggeler, welcome back to the Permanent Council. Thank you for your clear and strategic Mission leadership and for ensuring the OSCE’s presence is visible across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are impressed by the Mission’s far reaching work, as detailed in your report, to advance reconciliation, combat corruption, and improve electoral integrity. It’s worth underscoring that the country’s democratic institutions and its Euro-Atlantic prospects are only as strong as the integrity of its elections. Your Mission’s work to promote democratic governance, human rights, media freedom, and the rule of law is vital.

The United States wants to see Bosnia and Herzegovina stable, secure, prosperous, and fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions. As Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Jim O’Brien said on January 11th, this requires economic integration into the European Union. The EU’s Western Balkans Growth Plan is encouraging, as it opens the door to the economic benefits of the European single market if Bosnia and Herzegovina makes necessary reforms. The Growth Plan requires strengthening governing institutions and holding political leaders accountable.

But there are real challenges that you note to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s peace and prosperity. Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik’s actions present the gravest threat to progress. Mr. Dodik’s repeated public secession threats undermine the Dayton Peace Agreement and subvert the interests of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are dangerous and detrimental to the country’s integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. We cannot turn a blind eye to his rhetoric. We must not allow those who seek to advance their narrow political interests to splinter the country.

We demonstrate our resolve through actions. The U.S. government has sanctioned multiple Republika Srpska officials for undermining or threatening to obstruct Dayton, including through legislative efforts inconsistent with the Bosnia and Herzegovina constitution and in defiance of its Constitutional Court. We will continue to use all tools available to hold these officials to account.

The Republika Srpska's legislative moves to crack down on the exercise of freedom of expression, including for members of the media and independent civil society, are simply incompatible with Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU aspirations.

We continue to encourage the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina coalition leaders to take Mr. Dodik's threats seriously while remaining calm and thoughtful in the face of his subversive actions. Let me be clear. We will not remain idle if Mr. Dodik sparks another conflict. We are committed to preserving Bosnia and Herzegovina's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and multi-ethnic character.

Ambassador Aggeler, we thank you and your team for your dedicated efforts across all three dimensions. We share your concerns about the lack of a Unified Budget and thank you and your team for persevering in a very difficult operating environment. The United States is, and will continue to be, your steadfast partner in advancing Bosnia and Herzegovina's reforms.

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