



STATEMENT

**by H.E. Tomislav Leko, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the
OSCE
in Response to the U.S. Mission Statement on Barring of NGO from House
of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina
at the 950th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
Vienna, 2 May 2013**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

We appreciate the interest of the distinguished U.S. delegation in the recent case of the ban imposed to the one of BiH NGOs to attend the session of the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly.

Namely, on April 17, the Collegium of the HoR of the BiH PA, on its 52nd session, has rejected to grant the permission to the NGO “Centri Civilnih Inicijativa – Centres for Civic Initiatives” (CCI) to attend the 47th session of the HoR of the BiH PA, which was held on April 18.

The decision itself came to great dissatisfaction of the CCI and a concerted criticism of the international representations in BiH.

CCI is one of the largest NGOs in BiH, focused at the parliamentary monitoring at all levels.

It is actually the first time that CCI faced the refusal on request to attend the PA session, as commonly the Collegium was granting the free access, as to the CCI so to the other NGOs and in line with Collegium’s internal Instructions on the attendance of the representatives of NGOs.

This motion was a kind of the response on the refusal of the officials of CCI to submit several reports in relation to its work (such as: monitoring methodology, financial operations, employment, etc.), whereby the Collegium referred to BiH’s Freedom of Information Act.

In fact, in its reply CCI has ignored the request of the Collegium and has claimed that it is not the subject of the mentioned Act.

However, the decision of the Collegium was not reached unanimously, but with the majority of votes, and it referred the 47th session of the HoR held on April 18, only.

(Mr. Denis Becirevic, the member of the Collegium, who voted for (the presence of CCI on PA session), has stated:

“I believe that the work of all state bodies must be transparent and therefore I voted “for”. I will do the same at the next sessions of the Collegium. Moreover, I believe that dialogue with non-governmental organizations must be continuous, but I expect NGOs to write the facts and truth about the work of state bodies. Continuous cooperation and consultations with NGOs should be in a function of creating useful information and ideas for positive change in BiH society. “)



*Stalna misija Bosne i Hercegovine pri Uredu Ujedinjenih naroda u Becu,
OSSE i drugim međunarodnim organizacijama, B E C
Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations Office
in Vienna, OSCE and other International Organizations, V I E N N A*

It is the truth that the Collegium of the HoR of the BiH PA, as well as many MPs, are not pleased with the CCI's reports on the work of PA and MPs and in return they have criticized the CCI for the partial and unfair approach.

Although CCI was not granted with the physical access to the 47th session, there are other tools of oversight of the work of PA. The BiH PA has achieved and adopted in its work the highest standards of transparency including those technical: *It has live audio and video streaming of its sessions, public debates and other events through its web site; which also includes: audio recordings of its sessions; all parliamentary materials including session agendas, draft laws, amendments etc. for each single committee and plenary session; financial data on MPs, etc. The web site, which is adapted for visually impaired visitors, is updated daily, including updates in English. (even the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH in his Press release of April 30, commended BiH PA for its openness)*

BiH remains dedicated to all OSCE commitments including those referring to free and unhindered work of the civil society organizations.

In the U.S. Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices in BiH for 2012, it is also said that:

"A variety of human rights groups and NGOs generally operated without restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases."

The CCI and other NGOs are free to request the permission for their access to the next, 48th session of the HoR of BiH PA, to be held on May 25.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman