

**OSCE Conference “Shared Future: Building and Sustaining Peace,  
The Northern Ireland Case Study”  
Dublin 27 April, 2012**

Dear,

Allow me to share a few thoughts on the experience the Republic of Macedonia has been through during its internal conflict in 2001, especially on the role of the International Community (IC) for taking the country back from the brink of the inter-ethnic war. Since independence, Macedonia was regularly a subject of soft mediation by the IC on the wide scope of issues. In virtually all instances it confronted problems consisted of interethnic elements, not unusual for a country with large ethnic and religious minorities. A single exclusion of the soft approach occurred in 2001/2, when a different type of external facilitation likely would have been pointless in dealing with the rather inflexible Government.

In 2001 the efforts of all relevant Euro-Atlantic international organizations were as intense and concerted as never before in the region. US envoy proved to be the key powerbroker of the Framework Agreement's (FA), subtly followed by his EU partner. While the two were theoretically equal, and conveyed synchronized political messages, in reality, it was an exercise of American diplomatic power that proved decisive to the final outcome. The reason for the external intervention: apart from the set of distinct strategic arguments, it was important for the EU and the US to keep alive a role model of multiethnic tolerance in the region notorious for instances of appalling human suffering and destruction in the past.

Besides the USA and the EU, the third important international actor during and after the conflict has been the longest-serving security field mission in the OSCE history - Spillover Monitoring Mission to Macedonia established in 1992, still active in Skopje. Initially the organization's task was the prevention of the conflict spillover from the then FR Yugoslavia, but, in 2001 its mandate has been significantly expanded in order to provide specific assistance to the authorities in the area of confidence-building measures between the biggest ethnic communities, especially in assisting the implementation of the basics of the FA: Law on Amnesty, equitable representation of ethnic communities in the public administration and use of ethnic symbols on the municipal and central level.

In the recent years, the EU has emerged as the prime external organization for monitoring implementation of the FA in the context of Macedonian candidacy for EU membership. This influence was substantially augmented at the very moment Macedonia applied for EU membership in March 2004, a mere 30 months after the cessation of armed hostilities, done exactly here in Dublin, during the Irish Presidency with the Union. Year and a half later Macedonia became a candidate, by all relevant accounts, mostly due to the successful management of the interethnic relations in the post-conflict period.

A negative legacy from the conflict was the deep ethnic split between Macedonian and Albanian views on the role of IC in 2001 which still holds to some extent. Ethnic Macedonians believe that Western alliance, led by the US, acted in favor of the Albanian community, as they did in Kosovo in the 1999. Albanians, on the other hand, were firm that the conflict was actually provoked by the ethnocentric policies of ethnic Macedonians and that the internationals sided with them for the right cause.

Finally, the massive involvement of the IC, as much as it was needed during the conflict and its aftermath, later on provoked an ownership problem because local stakes were less visible while people and politicians were far from prepared to participate and lead the processes by themselves.