



**PERMANENT MISSION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT

by

**H.E. Zeljko Komsic, Chairman of the Presidency
of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

at

the Generale debate

of the

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Mr. President Francis,

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen!

Building on the theme of this year's Session of the United Nations General Assembly, which is the **'Rebuilding trust and Reigniting Global Solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all'**, at this important place, allow me to talk about important elements from the point of view of a small, yet proud, state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For its part, Bosnia and Herzegovina has given support to the 2030 Agenda, especially its goals, that, to the greatest extent, concern the creation of the world and the environment in the United Nations member countries, in a way that we as states and their societies, are prepared and specially trained to implement all the steps that will lead us to self-sustainable development.

However, in today's world, often dominated by war and various geopolitical goals, it will be very difficult to achieve this, at least in the way as it was planned in the 2030 Agenda.

For this reason, I specifically wish to emphasize that the first step with which we must start our activities is the one that will lead us to permanent peace, as the world's priority number one, and then to other mutually related activities, in order to have our countries and societies ready for solidarity and progress.

These activities are by no means easy, and they require a lot of wisdom, planning and good management of all processes and procedures that can lead us to the implementation of the Agenda 2030.

If we start from the premise offered as the theme of this year's session of the United Nations General Assembly, which talks about building trust and encouraging global solidarity, then I feel free to point out, in a few sentences, the elements that could possibly make achieving these goals difficult.

At the very beginning, I take this opportunity to remind you that migrations are one of the elements of the Agenda 2030, trying to be dealt with systematically and with specific governance.

Although the Agenda for Sustainable Development until 2030 recognizes migrants as "agents of change and development" in countries of their origin, transit and destination", the Agenda

primarily focuses on migrants as beneficiaries of sustainable development goals (e.g. through a higher level of protection, their rights and transparency).

Furthermore, the Agenda does not refer to the broader concept of the diaspora or to the role it plays as a possible means of development.

This statement, extracted from one of the IOM (International Organization for Migration) documents, is most certainly true, but when we come to the starting point of migrations, that is, go out into the field in certain countries, then we will certainly see several things that are undeniably happening.

The current form of migration management has reached such a stage where large and powerful countries, for their own benefit, carry out a certain type of selection of migrants, in such a way as to select the best and most educated among them, such as doctors, engineers, scientists and other highly qualified persons, and are ushering them to larger countries where their knowledge and abilities are exploited, exclusively for the benefit of these larger systems.

In larger countries and larger systems, such selected migrants can be "agents of change" or bearers of various improvements, but, at the same time, the potentials and capacities of the smaller countries from which the migrants are coming from, are weakened.

Small countries, in addition to losing the best quality personnel, are also losing all the investments made, including the financial ones. The investments made in creating these highly qualified profiles.

Of course, it is completely clear that there is such a form of migration, in which large groups of people are trying to escape war and the horrors of war, but there is also what we call economic migration, through which migrants are being directed, based on their potential and capacity.

In both cases of migration, large countries and their larger systems are the ones who are doing the selection and choosing the best profiles of migrants, in line with their needs and aspirations, while, at the same time, the systemic weakening of the small countries from which the migrants come from is taking place. What do I mean by this?

In short, it is difficult to talk about building trust while larger countries and their large systems are taking over the population of smaller countries through migration, and, simultaneously, the smaller countries are emptying out, resulting in the creation of an environment in which poverty develops and completely prevents any form of development in economic and social sense.

Thus, a direct attack is made on the possibility of creating prerequisites for self-sustainable development in smaller countries.

From the point of view of my country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is very easy to provide additional arguments and proof confirming this matter.

In my country, there is a significant outflow of the population, going to larger and more developed countries, mostly to countries we view as western democratic countries.

While investigating why our people, Bosnians and Herzegovinans, decide to leave their country, and look for better living conditions in some other countries, we came to a conclusion that the fundamental reason for their departure is their conviction of the lack of perspective in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When we took into account what our people have stated as one of the basic shortcomings of the perspective in their country, we saw that it refers to how, specifically, the political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not entail complete democracy, but rather a form of ethocracy, or a system in which elections for government institutions, exercise of power, distribution of jobs in the state, even in the real sector, are primarily based on ethnicity as a prerequisite.

In such a system, you usually don't have the best people in key positions, people who, with their knowledge and abilities, can build a political, economic and social system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the contrary, you have ethnically and politically suitable staff who can hardly be expected to lead the overall progress of the country.

This value system has been going on for a very long time. In such a system, the key jobs are not performed by the best and most qualified people, but by the politically and ethnically suitable ones. The current political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based exclusively on ethnic and then on political affiliation, completely degrades democracy as an important principle for creating an environment with equal opportunities for all people.

Such a system, which guarantees participation in government to certain political actors and their ethnically based political parties, has the form of former and current totalitarian systems, in which power is exercised in an autocratic manner, through autocratically inspired political actors.

As a result of this unfinished political system, we have a slow development of the country, while such politics obstruct what, in my opinion, is one of the key goals of my country - its path to membership in larger supranational systems such as the European Union or NATO Alliance.

The irremovability, or particularly difficult replaceability of the authorities, creates such an environment where even the authorities themselves no longer work for the benefit of their citizens, because they feel that there is no need for such a thing. The distribution of political and

social power is already guaranteed to them in advance by the system itself, a system based on ethnicity.

Our current political system is skillfully used by our western and eastern neighbors, and through ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to which they claim national rights, they are running Bosnia and Herzegovina, not with the primary aim of helping the members of these ethnic communities, but with the aim of dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina or making it meaningless as a state.

Our two neighbors, through the ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to which they strive to claim every right, even twenty-seven years after the aggression they had carried out over Bosnia and Herzegovina, are in this manner, making an attack on the sovereignty of our country, which makes it almost completely impossible to have any democratic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This practice also violates the minimum of interstate trust, because unfortunately, our neighbors are not investing sincere energy with the goal of building interstate cooperation, but are rather investing energy in weakening our state.

This is a visible problem, which extends to the entire region of the Western Balkans, where there are different ideas, plans and intentions to change the internationally recognized borders, to reorganize the region into something that has no point of contact with democracy.

For such activities and policies, neighboring countries very often have, at first glance, surprising and unexpected support from countries that we consider to be democratic liberal states and societies, but certainly also from those that are not democratic, and that we today recognize as aggressor states with authoritarian regimes.

Regretfully, there are many, both in the East and the West, who believe that their barely hidden support for those who want to completely control, and ultimately divide Bosnia and Herzegovina, will bring stability to the Western Balkans.

We, who represent the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina here at the United Nations, believe that this will not bring either stability or progress in the Western Balkans.

Our neighbors cannot divide Bosnia and Herzegovina among themselves without entering into mutual conflict. We will certainly not allow the division and disappearance of our thousand-year-old state, at any cost, no matter what anyone thinks about it.

That is why we believe that it is in the interest of the United Nations, if peace is to be preserved in the Western Balkans, to support the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its institutions.

If the United Nations wishes to preserve peace in the Western Balkans, then it should support those who have not violated democratic and civilizational norms, who have not committed genocide, were not part of joint criminal enterprises, did not destroy people's lives because of their ethnicity, did not destroy other people's temples and shrines, did not advocate revanchism and revenge.

If such support is absent, then the responsibility and blame for destabilization does not lie with us, who will certainly not calmly and idly observe some new attempt to destroy our Bosnia and Herzegovina.

However, the fundamental problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina lies in the inequality of citizens in the political and electoral system, the result of which is an ethnic system of governing the country, a system that is destined to be conflictual.

In addition, the ethnic system of exercising power in my country continuously creates space for nepotism and corruption in all segments of society, especially in government institutions.

As a consequence of the ethnic system of exercising power, we have nepotism in the selection of people to perform the most important political and economic jobs. The ethnic political system in my country is the one that generates and encourages nepotism and corruption the most, and nepotism and corruption destroy social cohesion and trust within a society the most.

That is why, for decades, we have not been able to create a society of equals, and with that, a society of equal opportunities, because with the employment through family connections and corruption pertaining to most important positions, one loses hope in the possibility of having a positive perspective.

So from this place, I want to ask an important question - How is it possible to build and achieve trust, that will lead to the creation of prerequisites for development, when we don't actually have enough democracy in our country, when our right to democracy is being taken away, and when an embargo to democracy is being imposed upon us, which leads citizens to great uncertainty and is the reason why they often decide to leave the country?

The latest interventions of the international representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. the intervention of the High Representative, by means of legal violence and the suspension of the Entity Constitution for twenty-four hours, which is an inconceivable precedent in the democratic world, did not remove obstacles to the normal functioning of the state, but rather strengthened the undemocratic ethnic principle and deepened the discrimination of citizens in the Constitution and the Electoral Law.

Democracy is the most important segment for building trust, both in our countries and globally.

It is very important, in order to create prerequisites for self-sustainable development, that the transition in these societies ends as soon as possible, through the transition from former totalitarian, autocratic systems, to a system based on full democracy.

That is why we expect the support of actors from the international community, even though they occasionally resort to undemocratic tools, like they occasionally completely deny the possibility of the development of democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the sake of their goals.

Of course, we are fully aware that there is a number of countries, members of the United Nations, with such history and historical context that they are not interested in democracy and its development. On the other hand, some indicators tell us that over 2/3 of the countries, members of the United Nations, are oriented towards democracy and its development, so my point of view is oriented in that direction as well.

I wish to add another important element here, which is indispensable in building trust for self-sustainable development. It is achieving a system of full human rights, which as its final outcome offers a society of equal people, equal citizens, and as a result of that, we can have a society of equal chances, with open perspectives for everyone.

If you do not have a system of equals, i.e. equal citizens, then it will be difficult to build trust in such a system, especially in a, still, post-war society such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Particularly if you have in mind, that our society has suffered aggression from our western and eastern neighboring countries, a direct consequence of which were the committed atrocious war crimes, and even the crime of genocide.

Such scenarios for Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be implemented, through political means, in peacetime conditions, while continuously asking for support from various parts of the international community.

At the same time, and regardless of the aforementioned scenarios, our obligation is to create internal prerequisites for building a society of equal people, i.e. equal citizens, as one of the basic "tools" that will enable us to avoid the possibility of future conflicts. Contained within the judgments of the eminent courts that deal with the protection of human rights, such as the European Court of Human Rights, there is a valuable resource for building a stable society in which the risk of internal conflict is reduced to a minimum. These judgements also take away an effective mechanism for violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the hands of potentially aggressive politics of the neighboring countries.

In short, this means that we in Bosnia and Herzegovina will have to change the entire paradigm within society, and shift from ethnic political representation to civic political representation, which is the standard in a democratic world.

We must use this opportunity to draw attention of the United Nations, on something that is, in my opinion, and I am sorry to say this, a very uncivilized stand of the Government and the Prime Minister of our neighboring country who have rejected a Judgement of the European Court of Human Rights, the latest judgement in the *Kovačević Case*, and have stood up for the very principles that were rejected in mentioned judgment, like the political principle of legitimate representation based on ethnicity, which is a generator of inequality among the citizens of BiH, and a means by which the neighbors undermine the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was done in such a way that it can be qualified as an interference in the internal affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The disrespect for the judgments of international courts, as could be heard from the Prime Minister of a neighboring country, is reminiscent of the attitudes towards international law that Vladimir Putin has built in the case of Ukraine.

However, this is not only about having a negative attitude towards the international standards of the United Nations, but also a policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted by its neighbors.

Only when civic political representation is accepted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the implementation of the judgments of the European Court, and when, in parallel, the attacks on the sovereignty of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the neighborhood stop, only then will we be able to participate in projects at full capacity and more efficiently, such as Agenda 2030, as an equal participant and actor of all planned activities.

In that case, we, as a country, will be ready and equipped with the potential to accept all the challenges posed before us by the self-sustainable development activities, to build our mutual social trust as a society of equals, and to be an active actor in building trust on a global level.

I believe you share my opinion that, in societies dominated by inequality, you will not be able to be a legitimate actor in promoting ideas of self-sustainable development, through building trust and global solidarity for all.

For such a thing, it is necessary to, first of all, reform our society in a way in which it will be able to understand the importance of solidarity for everyone, with people who are equal in everything in that system and who can produce solidarity towards others on an equal grounds.

In the conclusion of this address, and in addition to everything previously stated, I would like to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina will actively work on the implementation of Agenda 2030. We will work on building trust and solidarity.

By rejecting the discriminatory ethnic concept, we will simultaneously reject the system dominated by nepotism and corruption, and thus bring our society into the ranks of democratic and mature societies.

Then we will become a society and a country that can actively participate in world processes, within the framework of the fundamental principles on which the current world order and what we call the international community, rest.

The transition process of our society can and should be relatively short, because the equality of all people is the basic premise of every modern democratic society, and, in this respect, we count on the support of that part of the international community that can help us in this.

I am aware of the existence of those other parts of the international community, which, for their geopolitical reasons, will offer resistance in order to keep Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the entire region of the Western Balkans, in a continuous state of destabilization and tension. Such people do not want democracy, but ethnocracy, disorder and violence.

And finally, I can say with certainty that Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a place where democracy and its values are defended. And there are only two sides - the one that is in favor of democracy and its values and the other side that is an opponent of democracy because its goal is the establishment of autocratic systems, undemocratic in character.

Thank you, Mr. President!