



*Check against delivery*

*Statement by*

***H.E. Dr. Zlatko Lagumdžija***

*Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina*

*at the 22nd session of the Human Rights Council –*

*High Level Segment*

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Mr. President of the General Assembly,  
Mrs. High Commissioner for Human Rights,  
Mr. President of the Human Rights Council,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of this very important post of the President of the Human Rights Council.

It is a great honor for me to address the Human Rights Council at its High Level Segment on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is an excellent opportunity to summarize what we have accomplished at the national and global level concerning improvement in protection of human rights during the last year.

Mr. President,

Allow me to remind you that Bosnia and Herzegovina had the honor to be the member of the Human Rights Council from 2007 to 2010. The experience from that membership has been very useful to us in many aspects. We have upgraded the training of our staff enhanced the capacity of our relevant institutions with the objective of ensuring full and effective participation of all stakeholders, including governmental and nongovernmental organizations and bodies, academia and private sector into the process of regular reporting to the organs and bodies of the Human Rights Council, implementing provisions of ratified human rights instruments and incorporating its recommendations into our action plans. Now, having an observer status in the Council, we continue to attach great importance to its activities, sharing our lessons learnt and some good practices.

My country gives high priority to the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms through strengthening of democracy, multicultural dialogue and respect of national, cultural and religious diversities and suppression of all forms of discrimination and intolerance against members of any part of the society. In that sense, we are continuously achieving significant progress creating more effective mechanisms in accordance with international standards.

At this point, let me inform you that we expect in the short period of time to fulfill obligations deriving from the decision of European Court of Human Rights on the Sejdić Finci case.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the family of 92 countries that issued Standing Invitations to the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. In the year that is behind us, Bosnia and Herzegovina was glad to host two thematic mandate holders, Ms. Rita Izsak, Independent Expert on minority issues in September 2012, and Ms. Rashida Manjoo, Special Rapporteur on Violence against women in October 2012. Ms. Izsak's Report will be discussed and adopted at this session of the Council. We are looking forward to host Ms. Farida Shaheed, the Special Rapporteur for cultural rights, at the beginning of May this year.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is proud to be among the first ten countries that ratified the Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that will enter into force in less than 3 months period, on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina has undertaken all necessary steps for establishment of the National Preventive Mechanisms to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in accordance with the Paris principles. This issue is very important for us. We have included all stakeholders from the governmental and NGO sectors and the international community in order to achieve the best results.

The cooperation with relevant UN bodies has also been very constructive. We have fulfilled our obligations in reporting to the relevant UN committees and bodies, through successful presentation of the initial and periodic reports on the state of human rights by specific topics. Last year three reports of Bosnia and Herzegovina were considered by the UN bodies: Second periodic report on the protection of the rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families, Combined second, third and fifth periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Report to the Human Rights Committee. This year the Report on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has been scheduled for consideration before the CEDAW Committee. With great appreciation we noticed that these respective bodies have recognized the progress we have made in most of these aspects of human rights protection.

At this particular forum, I would like to mention the Regional Donors Conference, held in Sarajevo on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012, when some 300 million of Euros were assured for adequate housing and better living conditions for the most difficult refugees cases in our region. I will take this opportunity to once again thank UNHCR and all donor countries for their contributions and to emphasize a very fruitful regional coordination and cooperation.

The problem of trafficking in human beings is still present in our country and the region as a whole, even though the significant progress in its eradication has been achieved. Great efforts and many measures have been undertaken by our relevant institutions at every level in order to finally stop this illicit activity. We are profoundly aware of the fact that the problem is regional and that only the regional approach could bring tangible results. For many years we have had a fruitful cooperation with the related institutions of all neighboring countries in that respect.

The effective functioning of the Universal Periodic Review as one of the Council's main mechanisms is of the paramount importance. It is of great value that even the most advanced countries in the field of respect of human rights could get valuable recommendations and go beyond the already achieved level. The second cycle of Bosnia and Herzegovina's UPR is scheduled for 2014 and we have already started preparing our national report.

Millennium Development Goals are one of the main pillars in striving to reshape the world, to upgrade people's lives. By fighting poverty and injustice we are at the same time progressing toward the better world in terms of human rights respect. Although there will be some countries which will fail to achieve all MDGs by 2015, we should work together to set up new goals, new agenda beyond 2015. Enormous technology innovations and more justice and solidarity in international relations should bring extraordinary positive results to even most remote and least developed countries. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation, necessary medical procedures and medications, more accurate statistical data, spread of information technology etc, are preconditions for human rights protection and improvement of quality of human life. Without sustainable development there is now sustainable progress in protection of human rights.

Mr. President,

I will draw due attention to the importance of the Human Rights Council's special sessions and constructive work in urgent situations. This Council's ability to react in urgent situations, especially in worst cases of human rights violations is crucial and we urge it to continue to do so.

Bosnia and Herzegovina closely follows the situation in Syria. We are seeing tragic loss of many innocent lives as a consequence of Assad's regime, slaughtering his own people. We are condemning the ones who use violence against civilians. It is high time for the international community to unite and stop it with all necessary means.

On the other hand, Bosnia and Herzegovina expects that after the successful intervention in the northern part of Mali, the humanitarian situation in the country will significantly improve, especially in the north.

Needless to say, it is our expectation to see deepening and spreading of the reconciliation process in Afghanistan, as the best guarantee for peace and prosperity of that long suffering friendly nation.

Mr. President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country with its own specific challenges like any other country in the world. But the challenges we face will not discourage us from fighting for better respect for human rights and better life of our citizens.

We are passing through several very difficult years of serious financial and economic crisis and bitter austerity measures widely applied by many governments in the world with negative implications on all aspects of human life, hopefully for the short term. But while we face many restriction and austerities in today's world economy, we should not allow it to be an obstacle for achieving the noble goal of universal human rights respect.

I thank you Mr. President.