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## **The Role of the International Community in the Internal Matters of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

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*The workshop on The Role of the International Community in the Internal Matters of Bosnia and Herzegovina featured the keynote lecture of Dr. Zlatko Lagumdžija, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina with introductory notes by Dr. Zlatko Sabic, professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana.*

On October 22, 2013, an open lecture on *The Role of the International Community in the Internal Matters of Bosnia and Herzegovina* was hosted at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. The lecture was attended by more than 150 students, LJ-Uni faculty members, as well as a large delegation of diplomatic mission representatives and Ministry officials from both countries. Preceded by the introductory remarks of Dr. Zlatko Sabic, Minister Lagumdžija delivered a 30-minute lecture that was then followed by a 40-minute Q/A session and concluding remarks by the host professor.

Minister Lagumdžija divided his lecture in three parts with this narrative following the same order of the lecture outline. From the very beginning, Minister Lagumdžija pledged to reflect on the role of the international community in BiH after the Dayton Peace Agreement as he quite justifiably claimed that the role of the same international community before the Civil War in BiH differed in both magnitude and scope. He initiated the lecture by reflecting on his fellowship period in the U.S. when he worked as a Fulbright professor of Computer Science and Electrical Engineering and lacked any interest in politics. However, it was during the same year while he was TV-witnessing the fall of the Berlin Wall when he realized that the dismantling of the Iron Curtain will have a direct impact on former Yugoslavia and his homeland in the years to follow.

Details about the dissolution of Yugoslavia or the initiation and the course of the Civil War in BiH were consciously omitted from the lecture. The focus was immediately shifted to the Dayton Agreement that in the opinion of Minister Lagumdžija “was an excellent agreement” but “it brought nothing but a peace”. Therefore, in the words of Minister Lagumdžija, the agreement ended the war and subsequently secured the peace, however, it failed to project pathways to and to prescribe measures for country’s future development, political consensus, and social integrity. As maintained by the Minister, BiH is and throughout the years has continually been in a state of limbo between two zones of influence: Washington and Brussels or, put in other words, disentangled between the U.S. and the EU; with the former influence more pronounced during the Dayton negotiations and the latter exhibiting increased dominance in present-day BiH.

Minister Lagumdžija did not spare criticism of both the US and the EU and their respective missions and interference in BiH. Quite the contrary, he classified them in the same category of world hegemonies that have impacted BiH in identical way with shared political agenda behind the formally promoted values and areas of acting. Nonetheless, BiH remains committed to pursuing its international goals which consist of accessions to the EU and NATO accompanied by an increased regional cooperation in the neighbourhood.

On the way to BiH's international pursuits, however, the international community in the country appears to only formally assist the aforementioned goals as contended by Minister Lagumdžija. Each international community deployed in a foreign country has objectives, strategies, and tactics and Minister Lagumdžija invited the audience to independently judge which are these in the case of the international communities in BiH. Uttered were multiple choice questions with alternative answers offered by the speaker, although these answers were rather self-asserted by the tone with which they were posed and within the context of the previous rhetoric.

*Objectives.* Does the International community aim at instituting stability or self-sustainability of the country? "Stability has been achieved but there is little progress in self-sustainability that the international community only rhetorically stands for" stated Minister Lagumdžija. Should the international community cement the exclusion or trigger inclusion in Bosnian society? "History shows that the international community sides with separatists who possess weapons" as inferred by the Minister, perpetuating this way the exclusion rather than the inclusion in the country. Does democracy bring and, analogically, does the international community add to the segregation of BiH or it helps the creation of a shared society? Minister Lagumdžija concluded the series of questions by noting that "For hundreds of years BiH has been a shared society; this held true during occupations by the Ottoman Empire, by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and within Federative Yugoslavia". He further added: "It was only in 1991 when paradoxically "democracy" came that BiH exhibited stark forms of segregation which are kept in a political status quo already for decades". The Minister went on to say: "you can only lock up a shared society in the status quo so to preserve it, you cannot hold under status quo a mess and segregation as this will fuel greater mess and wider divisions in the long run".

*Strategies.* Evocative of the market logic for inventing products and providing services according to an identified demand in a particular society, Minister Lagumdžija inquired "What is the product of the international community?". Even more so, "what is their strategy on how to best sell it?". According to Minister Lagumdžija there are three tribes living in BiH, and "the role and strategy of the international community is to satisfy them". "The international community pleases those with weapons" in the experience of international interferences in numerous hotspots around the globe, and "there is nothing different in the case of BiH" added Lagumdžija.

*Tactics.* "Is the agenda of the International Community driven by values or by force?". Again, Minister Lagumdžija presumed that the values-driven agenda existed only on paper; therefore, for the past 20 years the "agenda must have been driven by something else but values" and the sole option remaining indicates this was the force.

*Possible solutions.* "The international community must twist the order of questions in their approach to and action in BiH." claimed Minister Lagumdžija. "What? How? Why? should be replaced with Why? As in Why should the international community keep their influence and deployments in BiH? How as in How should this be achieved if the Why leads to a viable answer and What as in What are the measures i.e. "the product" that will contribute to a positive change in the country and the society as a whole?".

The answer is quite simple and can be located in a maxim invented thousands of years ago Minister Lagumdžija concluded: "The international community in Bosnia and elsewhere should adhere to the moral: Don't Do to Others What you Don't Want Them to Do to You".

Off the questions asked by the students, only the last one required an answer that cannot be located in the above elaborate: "Do you think that the secession of Kosovo will have an impact on Bosnia?". As quite expected, Minister Lagumdžija asserted that comparing the case of Kosovo and Bosnia is like comparing a plumb and a banana. "The two cases bare 0% resemblance as Kosovo has always been a segregated society unlike Bosnia; this fact is also coupled with the different

statuses they enjoyed during Yugoslavia”. The prospects for any impact on and spillovers in BiH were categorically rejected.

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