

Non-permanent membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the United Nations Security Council 2010 - 2011: Challenges of the January 2011 Presidency

Introduction

The non-permanent membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been a point of discussion for a decade, since the introduction of the idea that B&H has a chance to become a positive story in ten years. Many have expressed skepticism over the possibility of B&H becoming a member of this body, as a country who had only just come out of a cruel war that resulted in a peace established by the Dayton Agreement in November 1995. More recently, issues have been raised of whether a country with such a complex government structure with a diverse ethno-political spectrum and an international protectorate that has varied in intensity over the past 15 years, is capable of performing such an important international role and fully exercising its sovereignty and integrity as a participant in dealing with international law.

As the date of the election of B&H to the UNSC approached, arguments as to *why not to do so* became more sophisticated and analytical. Is B&H capable of taking part in the body that reviews the reports made by the High Representative in B&H and that approved his appointment? What will the lobbying and the membership itself cost B&H and what is its use? How will B&H define its foreign policy when, at the moment, only a five-page document on *Basic Directions of B&H Foreign Policy*¹ exists? Does B&H have sufficiently competent people for this job? Will it be possible to adequately equip the B&H Mission in NY and to send diplomats? How will the B&H Presidency agree on foreign policy decisions on a daily basis? Will the communication between the cabinets of the members of the Presidency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) be sufficient? Will the rotation in the B&H Presidency interfere with this process?

In the final days before assuming the presidency, issues were brought up regarding consensus in the B&H Presidency, successful performance in presiding over UNSC with the Council of Ministers not being formed and the *de facto* foreign minister's technical mandate. There were even statements that the B&H Presidency does not have a position on the Middle East, which proved not to be the case.

In this analysis we will attempt to argue the fact that the situation is not as unsatisfactory as it seems and that the membership of B&H on the UNSC is a rare and positive story that deserves to be told.

1 http://www.mfa.ba/vanjska_politika_bih/osnovni_pravci_vanjske_politike_bih/default.aspx?id=2

On the role, composition and operation of the UN Security Council

The UN Security Council is the highest political and operational body of this global organization. It is composed of 15 members, five of which are permanent and have veto rights: France, China, the Russian Federation, the United States and the United Kingdom. The other ten members are elected by the UN General Assembly for a period of two years, and they are nominated by groups of countries as their candidates. Bosnia and Herzegovina was elected in 2009 from the East European Group for the UNSC membership for the 2010/2011 period.

In addition to B&H, other non-permanent members of the Security Council in 2010 were Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria with terms until the end of 2011, and Austria, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda whose terms ended on December 31st 2010. They were replaced by Germany, India, South Africa, Portugal and Colombia. The first three of these aim to become permanent members of the Security Council in a future reorganization of the UNSC.

The UN Security Council adopts binding resolutions, presidential statements and press statements and reports. These decisions are made by consensus; if a permanent member vetoes a decision, it cannot be adopted. The UNSC has dozens of working groups responsible for various global issues handled by the UN, which requires a large administrative apparatus in the countries' missions to the UN, as well as in the UN Secretariat, which provides technical and expert support.

Each UNSC member has one vote. Procedural decisions require affirmative votes of nine out of the 15 members. All substantive matters require affirmative votes of nine members including the five permanent members or at least their abstention. In accordance with the UN Charter, all members of the United Nations are obligated to accept and implement the UNSC decisions. Whereas other organs of the UN give recommendations to governments of member states, only the UNSC has the power to make binding decisions. If the Council fails to reach an agreement on a resolution, it can adopt a statement which does not have the weight of international law like a resolution but can be adopted by consensus. All UN member states that are not UNSC members can take part in Council discussions on matters concerning their country without a right to vote.

On candidacy and election of B&H from the East European Group

Bosnia and Herzegovina announced its candidacy ten years ago, but a real opportunity arose in 2008 when Poland indicated the possibility of withdrawing from candidacy, which was confirmed in 2009. This left Bosnia and Herzegovina as the only candidate in the East European Group, and all countries from the Group expressed their support. During 2009 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs campaigned intensely with the goal of securing the necessary majority of votes in the UN General Assembly. The Minister of Foreign Affairs took part in dozens of bilateral meetings and visits to countries on various continents, possibly even more than necessary considering that B&H was the only

candidate. Additionally, visits of the Presidency members to the UN increased in frequency. In September 2009 the chairman of the B&H Presidency Željko Komšić spoke on behalf of Bosnia-Herzegovina before the UN General Assembly for the first time based on an officially agreed upon foreign policy platform and presentation.

On B&H Foreign Policy and benefits of the membership

The only official document that defines B&H foreign policy are the *Basic Directions of B&H Foreign Policy* created in 2003. Generally, the B&H Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no direct experience or opportunities for collecting data on crisis areas in Africa and Asia, due to its sparse diplomatic network. However, the ministry did manage to prepare a sufficient amount of information regarding the situation before becoming a member of the UNSC. One of the most immediate benefits of UNSC membership is the fact that B&H, facing the necessity to form a stance on global issues handled by the Security Council, had to define its position by way of hundreds of statements and positions created and publicly presented to this body. In this way, the foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina was essentially created over the past year, and this vastly surpasses the scope of *Basic Directions*. The necessity to form a position within a global organization eliminated the everyday political practice of failing to reach a common stance on foreign affairs issues within B&H beyond the declarative. It has thus been demonstrated that institutions are able to function when facing the challenges of international obligations and when they are a part of the mechanism that requires keeping up to date with global politics.

On functioning, resources and coordination between and within the B&H Presidency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Mission in New York

Another positive occurrence brought about by UNSC membership is the increase in coordination within and between the institutions in charge of establishing and implementing foreign policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs formed the Department for Coordination of UN Security Council Activities². The Department is in constant communication with the B&H Mission to the UN, and they cooperate on drafting statements and proposals on the position of B&H. In this process the Mission utilizes its knowledge of positions of other missions to the UN and the UN Secretariat, and the Department utilizes information from sources available to MFA B&H headquarters. Also, there has been an increase in coordination within the B&H Presidency, where each of the three Presidency members' offices has appointed an advisor responsible for final agreement on positions and statements on MFA proposals.

2 <http://www.mfa.ba/ministarstvo/>

Experiences and controversies of the membership in 2010

System organization

It needs to be pointed out that the organization of the system was not an easy task. There had been plenty of beginner's errors and failure to understand the new circumstances for B&H. One of the problems the B&H Mission faced was inadequate facilities and technical equipment as well as a lack of staff. At the beginning of 2010 the Mission moved to a new space and received new adequate equipment. However, the greatest issue remained: an insufficient number of staff members. The Council of Ministers had to approve the systematization of posts and more funding, but a political agreement for this had not been reached.

Therefore, the B&H Mission to the UN started with six people who had to cover multiple areas. An attempt to solve this problem was to hire temporary employees on a contractual basis which met with objections from the financial auditors, and this was solved in part with the assistance of MFA diplomats, i.e. their being temporarily relocated to New York and assigned tasks related to the Security Council. Currently the B&H Mission to the UN in New York consists of 12 diplomats including the Ambassador – the Head of the Mission.

Preparations for the membership in MFA headquarters required reorganization and establishing a new department as well. The usefulness of such a department and whether it will be superfluous in the whole structure was brought into question. Fortunately, it proved to be useful. In a way, the activities of this department made up for the initial lack of resources in the Mission. A far more serious risk for the operation was constant political and personal animosity between the foreign minister and the MFA deputy minister who are members of opposing political parties. Although initial analyses suggested that the B&H Presidency would present the main impediment, it became evident that it could make decisions fairly quickly after receiving input from the MFA. As a result of increased communication and use of contemporary technologies, bureaucratic mechanisms for administrative protocols that used to delay documents prepared by the MFA by up to a day or two before they could be signed by an authorized person and delivered to the Presidency were eliminated. Therefore, the Presidency is able to receive drafts of documents far sooner than using the previous standard procedure.

In addition to everything mentioned above, interpersonal and collegial relationships and elementary trust among people who, as state officials, are required to perform their tasks under exceptionally stressful conditions proved to be of special importance. Everyone involved in this process, in the Mission, MFA headquarters and the Presidency completed training by the former UK Ambassador to the UN, Sir Emyr Jones Parry. This training took place on several occasions in Sarajevo, New York and London.

However, there are evident flaws regarding insufficient utilization of diplomatic missions and consular offices, a lack of political and analytical resources at MFA headquarters and an absence of a suitable strategy for informing the public on the activities of B&H with

the UNSC. Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not created a feedback mechanism about the activities of B&H with the UNSC for the East European Group that nominated B&H. Efforts in this area would contribute towards creating a positive image of our country. Finally, there is a certain reluctance and over-cautiousness about involvement of civil society in the role of think-tanks in any activities in creating the approach to foreign affairs. As a consequence, B&H ambassadors in various locations are insufficiently informed about the activities of B&H with the UNSC, which also applies to the public and the media who are forced to create *exclusives*, mostly by presenting information without basis in fact.

Defining B&H positions on key topics

The consulting mechanism currently in place starts with the Mission providing initial elements and early drafts that are processed and shaped in the Department for the UNSC coordination at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Next, instruction and report proposals are sent to the cabinet of the Foreign Minister and the Deputy Foreign Minister, and are finalized and sent to the Presidency after their suggestions have been received. At the Presidency, the proposals are discussed between the cabinets and the final version is sent to the MFA B&H which forwards it to the Mission.

The media frequently claims that the B&H Presidency does not have an agreed position on the approach with the UNSC, but this is not, in fact, the case. Despite the fact that the public might be more interested in reading about differences of opinion and opposing standpoints, the truth is quite the opposite. Since B&H became a member of the UN Security Council, the Presidency has reviewed, agreed on and adopted over three hundred positions and statements that were presented by the ambassador Ivan Barbalić, the permanent B&H representative with the UN, when voting on resolutions, presidential statements and press statements released by the UNSC and its committees. More frequently the media claims that the B&H Presidency does not have an agreed position on the Middle East. The truth of the matter is that the topic of the Middle East and the Palestinian issue is reviewed in UNSC sessions every month, and often includes the issues of Lebanon and Syria, or Golan Heights. As a result, the B&H Presidency has presented an agreed position on the issue of the Middle East ten times, and failed to do so only twice. Particular attention was drawn to the statement condemning the attack on ships delivering humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, where there had been no agreement on the strictness of the B&H position. Similar tensions arose from statements regarding the UN Mission in Kosovo – UNMIK. Other cases of disagreement were not related to the UNSC, but the General Assembly and other UN bodies. For instance, one such issue was the vote on the Goldstone Report on human rights violations by Israel in the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council in Geneva and the vote on the Arab League declaration inviting Israel to join the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its protocols. A final example of disagreement was the statement made by then-chairman of the B&H Presidency Haris Silajdžić at the UN General Assembly session in September 2010. However, all the disagreements were a result of the influence of the 2010 election campaign and increasing tensions using divergent foreign policies

presented as pro-Arab versus pro-Israel positions.

It is important to note that over three hundred B&H positions and statements were agreed on, as opposed to a handful of disagreements, which amounts to over 97 percent agreement. Even the resolution on imposing new sanctions against Iran was agreed on. Realistically, for a country like B&H this can be considered an exceptional success. Furthermore, in accordance with the B&H Presidency Rules of Procedure, all members of the Presidency have a legal right to invoke vital national interest for any foreign policy issue that cannot be agreed upon, but that has never happened, which indicates that the differences were never vast enough to do so. Following the inauguration of the collective head of state, Nebojša Radmanović took over as the chairman of the B&H Presidency, and only several days later traveled to New York with an agreed upon platform and a speech to be made before the UN Security Council.

Challenges in presiding over the UN Security Council

Presidency function

The purpose of presiding over the UN Security Council is efficient and unbiased coordination of activities and consultations with other Council members in preparation of sessions. The President of the Council decides on the agenda after consulting other UNSC members and enables good coordination which should result in the Council's efficient decision making. The UN Secretariat should be consulted in advance regarding the purpose of a particular session of the UNSC and elements of presentations, press statements, or presidential statements should be defined accordingly. It is important to keep in mind that the B&H Mission to the UN communicates with other Missions, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters communicates with other ministries of foreign affairs.

Procedures

One of the conclusions of the training that took place at the MFA is the necessity of flexibility when making decisions related to operation of the UNSC. This applies to holding emergency meetings. In January 2011, the B&H Ambassador with the UN is not only a permanent representative of B&H with a global organization, but the President of the UNSC as well. Therefore, he must be able to make decisions on the operation of the Council and organize emergency meetings whenever the Secretary General and the five permanent members request it.

The president controls plenary meetings, that can be in the form of public or closed sessions. His role is to be a neutral leader of the session, but he can speak on behalf of his country in the so-called “national capacity” at the end of the session following an announcement that he is not speaking as the President of the Council. It is interesting to note that there is no formal order of speaking, be it alphabetic or some other order.

Members request the floor by raising the tablet with the name of their country to get the President's attention. In accordance with this, members begin speaking when they get the floor. In public sessions voting is often done simply by raising hands.

Still, the majority of work begins and ends on the expert level in more or less informal groups in meetings attended by first or second secretaries of missions. These meetings take place several times every day, on various topics. Their results are initial information and drafts of positions and assessment of other members' positions. Depending on the complexity of the issues, anywhere between two and twenty sessions can take place before the text of a resolution is reached. If the issue is familiar and the position is based on basic principles of the UN and there is no disagreement between the Security Council members, the initial draft can end up as the final draft. However, if the issues in question are particularly important and deal with crises, consultations are usually performed at higher levels, frequently at the level of the heads of missions. Conversations in lobbies, the so-called lobbying, is inevitable, where the relationships between friendly countries that often try to use their position to reach an agreement between opposing sides are of importance. Finally, there are also non-governmental organizations, the media and analysts who attempt to present their understanding of the situation concerning issues being reviewed by the UNSC.

Public Relations

Over the course of the presidency, the President is in the media spotlight and is required to answer questions without assuming what the decisions of the UNSC are and without criticizing the members and their positions. The form of the press statements is usually stating that the Council is in the process of reviewing the issue in question, that it will meet and urgently discuss the situation, and that the public will be informed on the decisions. Anything beyond this would signify breaking basic diplomatic rules of the UN by the President and would betray the trust of other members. This is of great importance because UNSC statements have the force of an official position and the procedure on agreeing on press statements requires consensus. Therefore, under no circumstance should there be any promises made on behalf of B&H or the UN Security Council, nor any assumptions about positions of other countries or the results of voting.

Key issues during presidency

The Monthly Schedule of issues handled by the UNSC and its committees and deadlines for adoption of reports are made a month in advance in consultation between the current and the following president and the UN Secretariat. Therefore, it is already known when each issue will be discussed during the B&H presidency. Certainly, inclusion of a certain unforeseen topic on the agenda is always a possibility, but there are procedures in place for such situations. In any case, the most significant topic during the presidency of B&H is the Sudan referendum.

Sudan Referendum

Sudan is the largest country in Africa, a typical post-colonial construct that gained independence in 1954. Sudan is ruled by Arabs – Muslims concentrated in the north as the most established and organized ethnic group in the country. The south is populated by native Africans, mostly of Christian or Animist faith. However, it is not their ethnic and religious differences that are the source of conflict, but rather it is the control of the country's resources. There are two large oil basins in central Sudan which provide economic power for the country's north, whereas the south is left to poverty, hunger and lack of basic infrastructure of the contemporary world. This status of the south of the country spurred a rebellion that has lasted for several decades and has resulted in the death of two million and displacement of nine million people from the south and the west of the country, and the president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, has been indicted for war crimes and is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague. Finally, in 2005 the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)³ was signed that set the date of the referendum on the separation of Northern and Southern Sudan for January 9th 2011⁴.

However, matters are not all that simple. In 2003, a rebellion arose in the western province Darfur which resulted in 300 000 deaths and the displacement of three million. This has been one of the largest humanitarian disasters of this century. Still, with the involvement of Chad and Qatar, an agreement has been reached which should ensure limited autonomy of Darfur within Sudan, representation in the central government and more funds for eliminating the humanitarian crisis.⁵

The third element in the Sudan issue is the small central province of Abeyi⁶. The largest oil fields are located in this territory. At the same time, Abeyi is holding a referendum on whether it will stay with the Northern or the Southern Sudan. It is important to note that the only oil pipeline from the two oil basins in central Sudan, which will be cut in half by the future border, leads north, to the Red Sea. However, there are already plans to create a new oil pipeline which would lead south across Kenya to the Indian Ocean, which will doubtlessly lead to a shift of power in exploitation of this fuel, as well as geopolitical relationships of the global powers in the Security Council with Sudan.

Essentially, there are two scenarios. The first is that the referendum goes peacefully and

3 *Comprehensive Peace Agreement – CPA*

4 “Sudan election. Let those people go.” *The Economist*, April 10th-16th 2010, pg. 13.

5 *Briefing Sudan Election. Hunt the missing voter. The Economist*, April 10th-16th 2010, pg. 23.

6 *South Sudan and independence: Pressing the north to let the south go. The Economist*, November 13th-19th

2010, pg. 52.

that all sides accept the results, which does not eliminate the possibility of retribution against the African population in search for work in certain areas in the north. The basis of this analysis is the interest of Northern Sudan to dispose of the underdeveloped South and redirect the funds previously used for military actions and a limited supply of food to the south towards further development of the north. They expect the south to be unstable for a certain period in the future, and that the oil pipeline will not be built through Southern Sudan in the near future, so that the north will continue drilling for oil and use it only for the development of the northern part of the country and the Arab population. This would ensure continuing popularity of president al-Bashir, and possibly reduce sanctions towards him personally. The other scenario anticipates the possibility of a continuation of conflict, if not with the Southern Sudan, then with Darfur or Abeyi, to keep al-Bashir in power by means of maintaining obligatory enemies. However, recent statements by Sudan officials and al-Bashir himself speak in favour of the first scenario of adhering to the provisions of CPA and accepting the results of the referendum. This is supported by completion of the census by December 8th 2010 as planned and the leaders of both sides having guaranteed to respect the rights of minorities. In accordance with this, there are two UN missions whose activities will be reviewed after the referendum by the UNSC. Those are the UN Mission in Sudan – UNMIS⁷ and the UN and African Union Mission in Darfur – UNAMID⁸.

Somalia

Somalia has been a regular topic at the UNSC for over a decade during which a civil war, collapse of the government, US intervention and paramilitary warfare took place. Two topics are related to Somalia. The first one concerns the situation in Somalia itself and the increase of forces of the African Mission in Somalia – AMISOM from 8 000 to 12 000 soldiers which is financed by UN funds. According to current assessments, an improvement of the situation cannot be expected in the near future, but an increase in security forces might contribute to an increase in stability and discourage activities of criminal groups. There are no ethnic or religious conflicts in Somalia; instead, it is a typical failed state that has fallen into anarchy. The other topic concerns piracy in the Gulf of Aden and combating this phenomenon around the Horn of Africa.

Nepal

The Nepal peace process began in 2005 and is currently in a very precarious stage that requires an increase in the involvement of local forces. The conflict in Nepal is between government forces and Maoists. Negotiations between the parties are in progress and over the past six months Nepal has been ruled by a temporary government. The challenges are the adoption of a new constitution, and integration and rehabilitation of approximately 19

7 *UN Mission in Sudan*

8 *UN and African Union Mission in Darfur*

000 Maoist insurgents. The UN support includes a monitoring mission in Nepal – UNMIN⁹. The UNMIN mandate, which was of a temporary nature, ends on January 15th 2011 and models of future engagements are yet to be determined.

The Middle East

The Middle East issue has been present in the UNSC since the organization was created over six decades ago. Many claim that the issue of the Middle East is one of the basic issues for maintaining world peace, as well as for fighting terrorism. Even a superficial list of key moments in history, initiatives and agreements, as well as problems that preceded them, would take more space than this entire analysis.¹⁰ Nonetheless, over the past several years, all resolutions and statements of UNSC members, including B&H, that are released monthly are almost identical. It appears as if everyone knows the solution for the Middle East, but nobody knows how to reach it. On this subject Bosnia and Herzegovina follows the positions resulting from existing international obligations arising from agreements signed by both Israel and the Palestinian government. The main issue when defining the position of B&H is how sternly to condemn negative actions and how much to approve of positive actions of the conflicting sides. Namely, how effective are any statements for the Palestinian authority and especially Israel, which has become a champion in ignoring resolutions and international agreements. The question arises about how much the Palestinian authorities are hindering themselves with their inability to control the radical groups who shoot rockets at Israeli settlements. Another question is how useful is Israel's decision to partially lift the Gaza blockade when the humanitarian situation is so dire that nothing except a full lift can help. Furthermore, there is the question of the violation of human rights of Palestinians to which Israel always responds by raising the question of imprisoned Israeli soldiers and terrorism against Israeli citizens. All this presents a vicious circle which, it seems, cannot be broken.

The main elements of positions of all UNSC members, including B&H, are as follows:

- concern over the violence and the breakdown of negotiations, which keeps the process in status quo;
- conviction that the continuation of negotiations is the best way to reach an agreement;
- concern over and condemnation of construction of new settlements in eastern Jerusalem;
- emphasis upon the fact that construction of settlements in the occupied territory is contrary to international law and accepted international obligations and the calling upon Israel to discontinue all activities of this kind;
- inviting both sides to refrain from unilateral actions that can further harm the peace process and its outcome;

9 *UN Mission in Nepal.*

10 *Armistice Now. The Foreign Affairs March/April 2010. pg. 50-62.*

- concern over the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Coast;
- conviction that complete and lasting peace in the Middle East is only attainable by implementation of relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council, the *Madrid Principles*, *The Road Map* and agreements already reached, as well as the *Arab Peace Initiative*;
- determination of the existence of the state of Israel and an independent, democratic, safe and sustainable Palestinian state that coexist in peace and security.

Recently the positions of all five permanent members of the UN Security Council are converging and they are less prepared to tolerate ignoring the UNSC resolutions. The latest act by Israel, the failure to extend the moratorium on construction of settlements, ignores diplomatic efforts by the US, particularly following the attack on Turkish ships, and further alienates Israel from the small number of friends it has. On the other hand, the Palestinian government refuses to continue the negotiations until Israel meets the requirements of the UN resolution and discontinues the construction of settlements. This frustrating situation contributes to the radicalization of Palestinians and increased support for Hamas, which is in charge of the government and advocates a war against Israel and a decrease of the political power of Fatah, whose member and president, Mahmoud Abbas, is the chief supporter of peace negotiations on the Palestinian side.

The media in Bosnia and Herzegovina began reporting that B&H did not have an agreed position on the Middle East and that this fact would be the main issue during the presidency of the UN Security Council because the Palestinians are preparing a resolution on the recognition of Palestine through the Arab League. This has proved to be incorrect information. Palestinians are working on a resolution on condemnation of the settlements, but it is uncertain whether it will make the UNSC agenda in January. This primarily depends on the five permanent UNSC members who are directly involved in the creation of all resolutions concerning the Middle East. However, it is important to mention that Argentina and Brazil have recognized the independent Palestinian state, and on December 13th 2010 the foreign affairs ministers of the European Union adopted a conclusion on willingness to recognize the Palestinian state when appropriate. Taking all of this into account, B&H will have no choice but to adopt the position of the permanent UNSC members and the EU, which will make agreement on the position for January easier. Incidentally, in 2010 B&H joined the statements of the EU 63 times¹¹, and the general attitude of the B&H Presidency is that B&H should follow the positions of the EU unless they conflict with the *Basic Directions of B&H Foreign Policy*. This is one of the requirements for all countries whose intention it is to become a member of the EU: consolidation of their foreign and security policies with those of the EU.

In addition to the above-elaborated issues, the Security Council will discuss the humanitarian situation in Haiti, on the anniversary of the devastating earthquake. Also, the Mission in East Timor – UNMIT will be on the agenda, and the Regional Center for

¹¹ Progress report on B&H for 2010 available at www.europa.ba and www.dei.gov.ba

preventative diplomacy in Central Asia – UNRCCA. Finally, unplanned discussions in January could concern the continuation of incidents on the Korean peninsula and the unrest in the Ivory Coast which could result in serious conflict.

Thematic Debate

During its presidency of the UN Security Council, Bosnia and Herzegovina will organize a thematic debate titled “Institution-building as a part of the peace-building process”. It is a common practice that the presiding country presents a thematic debate on a current issue. The B&H Presidency selected this topic as the most appropriate relative to the experience of our country. In addition to this, possible topics included regional integration and the preventative role of diplomacy. Further, the B&H Presidency decided that the thematic debate should take place at the level of the permanent representatives. It might have been more favorable for the image of the country if it were to take place at the ministerial level, but this level of thematic debate is not uncommon in diplomatic practice. A rather peculiar occurrence was Minister Alkalaj's public statement alleging this joint decision of the collective head of state to be scandalous, because challenges such as this are the very thing that taints the image of B&H, much more so than the level of the presenting of the thematic debate. However, despite these quasi-political sophomoric statements, it is of importance to note that all preparations were made in due time and used only domestic resources. It should be kept in mind that this is merely one of the activities of the Security Council where the presiding country makes a significant contribution by examining UN positions using the academic practice of brainstorming. For this reason, one should not put too much weight on the level at which the debate takes place. The main purpose is to contribute to further development and improvement of UNSC activities in this area, and B&H has a truly vast experience to offer.

The criteria when selecting a topic are: 1) relevance, 2) originality or at least avoidance of repeating the same topic within a short period of time, 3) its importance to the UNSC system of operations, and 4) whether the presented experiences, analyses and lessons learned would make a significant contribution to the work of the Security Council.

The first step is creating a conceptual first draft of the document and delivering it to the other UNSC members for comments and achieving a document acceptable for everyone. No formal negotiations are held, therefore no formal approval of the body is required to include the document in the agenda, but it is necessary to avoid elements that might cause confusion. A document is considered successful if it can be used as a basis for presentations of other UNSC members in the future. The draft of the paper is not adopted, but is used instead as the basis for discussion and creation of a presidential statement – PRST¹². At this stage, the document becomes the ownership of the Security Council and its final version depends on the suggestions and alterations agreed upon and adopted by the UNSC.

Considering the criteria, it could be said that Bosnia and Herzegovina has made a good

¹² *Presidential Statement*

choice, since creation of institutions has proved to be very important for creating peace in our country. However, institutions are created when there exist obligations to achieve the objectives a country has undertaken. In this process goals and objectives are the fuel needed for institutional mechanisms. Finally, the process of institutionalization leads to standardization of practices and stabilization of the situation in post-conflict societies.

Conclusion

The title of the thematic debate initiated by B&H with the UN Security Council is a paradigm of sorts of the membership of our country in this body of global organization. Despite all the difficulties and doubts, it is evident that the creation of institutions is truly a part of creating peace, especially when the institutions work together towards the same goal. Fifteen years after the war in B&H ended, B&H is in the position of presiding over the UN Security Council. And Bosnia and Herzegovina is not the only one. This term includes Lebanon, which is also a member of the body that is discussing the situation in Lebanon as well. Our country is assuming presidency of the UNSC at a point in time when the new Council of Ministers has not yet been formed and the new Minister of Foreign Affairs has not yet been appointed. However, institutions do their jobs. The B&H Presidency creates foreign policy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs carries it out. Such a situation is not a negative indicator. It demonstrates that under the right conditions, institutions are capable of overcoming negative political processes. Moreover, the process itself introduced an increase in coordination, more consultation, and a clearer foreign policy. Additionally, even acknowledging all technical and substantive inadequacies in the operations of our institutions, the fact is that the Presidency has agreed on 97 percent of the decisions, and the remaining three percent were not significant enough to cause invoking a veto as prescribed by the Constitution. Before the vote on the election of B&H as a non-permanent member of the UNSC at the end of 2009, as well as the recent beginning of the new presidency, the then chairman of the B&H Presidency traveled to New York with an agreed upon platform and speech. Another recent example is the NATO Summit in Lisbon.

Admittedly, not everything can be said to work as it should, without unnecessary obstacles and disagreements, but that is a part of the democratic process as well. Currently, all requirements for a positive assessment of the UNSC activities so far have been met. Taking into account the plan of activities for January and the level of preparations, a positive outcome of the B&H presidency of the UN Security Council during January 2011 can be expected. By the end of the term, as a member of the UNSC, further challenges and controversies are to be expected, but the experience gathered will undoubtedly result in positive elements outweighing the negative. However, this will likely require a detailed analysis of the experiences of B&H during its UNSC term of 2010/2011 and an attempt to preserve and build upon institutional memory.