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Venue : BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
Date : 23-24 MAY 2000
Title : PEACE IMPLEMENTATION COUNCIL CONFERENCE (PIC)

Mr. Chairman

Your Excellencies

Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to start by expressing my sincere gratitude to our host for the invitation to this very important Conference as well as for the excellent arrangements.

At the outset, may I comment H.E Mr. Jaime Jose Matos da Gama, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal and EU President for his most refreshing Statement. I also would like to convey my appreciation for the sustained focus given by Dr. Javier Solana, the High representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary General of the European Council, and Mr. Chris Patten, Commissioner for External Relations of the EC, to ensure forward momentum in bringing about development and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

My appreciation also goes to the former High representative, Mr. Carlos Westendorp for his dedication and important contributions he had made. I also join other Speakers in warmly welcoming Mr. Wolfgang Petristch, the new High Representative for the Implementation of Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I share the concerns and hopes expressed by previous Speakers on the evolving situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For this and other reasons, Malaysia has participated in the meetings of the PIC since the beginning.

What all the parties and the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina should avoid is fatigue on the part of the international community setting in. This weariness could develop if the leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not act in a concerted and coordinated manner in building a more tolerant country and a multi-ethnic society. This larger objective should override tactical and factional differences. This is a message our meeting today, as previously, must send to the leaders and peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

There are also positive signs amidst all the gloomy ones. After 4 years, Malaysia is delighted to learn that the results of the recent April 8 local government elections did reflect some measure of optimism. The results showed that the ordinary people of the different ethnic groups want amore tolerant society. It also showed that they

want to reverse the violence of the past. They also want to check the corruption that has grown in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the war.

It is, therefore, equally important that we get a change in the political landscape in the coming years. A constructive political landscape is what the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community expect of the leaders there. This would also encourage the return of more refugees to local communities. If this change in the political landscape can be encouraged and sustained, surely the international community will also be encouraged to push in more reconstruction aid to help create more jobs.

Actual aid delivery against pious pledges is also a matter of concern. Aid delivery should be an urgent priority as well. Failure to create an atmosphere for job prospects is as dangerous as failure to create an atmosphere of tolerance. Both these aspects should be given priority, otherwise efforts to create a multi-ethnic society could be put asunder.

Greater attention should also be made to press ahead with serious economic reforms.. In this regard, I wish to emphasize the importance of building credible public institutions responsible for protecting the citizen's political, economic and legal rights. However, in building these institutions, they should take into account the country's unique history, culture and recent background.

As noted earlier, I wish to stress that there is growing frustration that jobs are not being created fast enough. It is also necessary for the international community to encourage and nurture small and medium scale businesses so that this sector can flourish. Large-scale infrastructure projects are important but emphasis should be placed in creating the necessary investment climate and legal regime so that investors can be encouraged to come in to develop a viable and sustainable economy.

Only through economic reforms, institution building and the creation of small and medium scale businesses can Bosnia and Herzegovina move away from over-dependence on international aid in the long haul.

Mr. Chairman,

In a nutshell, a constructive political landscape, economic reforms, return of refugees, building of institutions and job creation ought to be the benchmarks against which we all must set ourselves in the coming years.

We want a fair and just multi-ethnic and tolerant Bosnia and Herzegovina for everyone. The international community will not tolerate those who seek to frustrate this aim.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that Malaysia remains committed to the peace process agreed in Dayton Peace Agreement and will continue to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina in this important process. Malaysia will also continue to make available to Bosnia training and other facilities as well as share its experience in the area of privatization and other areas of socio-economic development that have been successfully implemented by Malaysia.

Thank you.

Brussels,
May 24 2000