

**To governments, institutions, religious leaders, media, and people of good will:**

Yesterday's death of Slobodan Milosevic, "the Butcher of the Balkans," has caught the world by surprise. The latest European villain has deceived the world again. He has escaped the hand of justice in this world!

Milosevic is gone but the consequences of the genocide, rape, torture, and human suffering he caused will be felt for a long time. Furthermore, his ghost is alive in the unjust and dysfunctional constitutional system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was imposed by the Dayton Accords to which Milosevic was a co-signer.

Please find attached the Declaration that was unanimously endorsed by the Chicago Leadership Conference of Bosnian and Herzegovinian-Americans, held on March 4, 2006. The document deals with the most important existing issues and calls for a new constitutional arrangement in Bosnia and Herzegovina that will reflect the best spirit of our American democratic traditions. It also calls upon all governments, institutions, and all people of good will to support our effort in bringing about justice, peace, security, and prosperity in our homeland of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Furthermore, the Conference, blessed by the Almighty God with the spirit of cooperation, and with forgiveness and mutual interests in our hearts, has returned our two communities in the USA (B&H Croats and Bosniaks) to open and friendly relations. We hope that the third B&H people, namely the Serbs, will also participate in our future deliberations and common efforts to bring about permanent peace and stability to our homeland and the region.

We call upon all involved, including governments, institutions, religious leaders, political parties, media, and all people of good will, to strongly support and endorse this Declaration.

Sincerely,

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# The Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

## Chicago Leadership Conference

Crowne Plaza Chicago O'Hare Hotel

March 4, 2006

### **Conference Declaration:**

**SUBJECT:** A Fresh Start: A New Constitution for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Her Integration into the Euro-Atlantic Family.

We, as Americans of Bosnia and Herzegovinian background, in particular as Bosniaks and Croats representing the undersigned organizations, and as individuals, have come together to assist the country of our origin in achieving the promise of a functioning democracy with a flourishing economy and a pluralistic society free of ethnic ghettos.

Our immediate goal is to help bring about essential changes to the country's constitution and institutions that will promote Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration into the Euro-Atlantic family as a full and equal partner. This is not an ethnically defined effort, for we are also welcoming others from B&H, Serbs in particular, to become partners in this ongoing effort to help fashion B&H into a stable, functional, and truly democratic European country.

**PRESENTED TO:** This Declaration will be presented to the United States Government, the Peace Implementation Council, European Union institutions and states, the United Nations, the B&H Government, the governments of both entities, B&H political parties, religious leaders, cultural and civic institutions and organizations, and the public at large. (We will also request that this Declaration be made into an official United Nations document and presented to all Security Council and General Assembly members).

### **Section I.**

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing negotiations between the leading political parties in B&H, under the supervision of the US State Department and its allies, regarding the future constitution and institutional arrangement of the country. Guided by the principles of justice, freedom, democracy, and equality for all, the undersigned representatives of Bosniak and Croat organizations, from across the United States, present at the Chicago Leadership Conference, unanimously

- **RECALL** that the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina is and has been recognized as an independent country. Its sovereignty and territorial integrity has been affirmed. It has been a member of the United Nations since May 22, 1992.
- **AFFIRM** that Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of three constituent peoples (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs) and others, and that it has a proud history of Islamic, Catholic, and Orthodox coexistence. This history of harmonious coexistence includes the many Jews who found permanent refuge in B&H after their 1492 expulsion from Spain.

- NOTE WITH DISGUST that Slobodan Milosevic's government of the rump-Yugoslavia (today's Serbia and Montenegro) and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) waged a war of aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to create an ethnically cleansed, Greater Serbia. This campaign of genocide was effectively implemented throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. The immense suffering caused by this war compares only to the suffering caused by the Nazis during the Second World War.
- ACKNOWLEDGE that the Dayton Accords, initiated in November 1995, brought to an end the 1992-1995 aggression.
- OBSERVE WITH REGRET that the same Dayton Accords continue to reward aggression and genocide by imposing the illegal and unjust division on the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina into two "entities" and by constructing a self-paralyzing and cumbersome constitutional system with ineffective governmental structures that continue to fail to address the consequences of genocidal politics and its effect on long-term regional stability.
- COGNIZANT that the present B&H Constitution (Appendix IV of the General Framework Agreement) was imposed and never ratified by the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- AWARE of the initiative of the US State Department and the US Institute of Peace to involve the leaders of B&H's major political parties in negotiating structural changes to the present political system in the context of the Dayton Accords, without involving the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina either in B&H or in Diaspora, including over 250,000 B&H-Americans, who are now both US citizens, voters and taxpayers, and B&H citizens, with property in the country and a direct interest in her developments.
- FULLY ALARMED that the same US State Department and its allies are not ready, even ten years after the end of the war, to take the necessary steps to bring about the unification and democratization of the country and to find a new, better, just, and lasting constitutional arrangement for Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with American values and its democratic tradition. Instead, the US State Department and its allies are supporting the existence and survival of "Republika Srpska," a neo-fascist statelet, which was created by the war criminal and fugitive from justice, Radovan Karadzic, who led a campaign of genocide and forced the displacement of Bosniaks and Croats. "Republika Srpska" is the main obstacle preventing B&H from joining the Euro-Atlantic family.
- REMINDED that the current political and economic environment and ethnically stratified institutions are discouraging confidence in a future of prosperity and coexistence, while also encouraging the exodus of the population and promoting ethnic homogeneity. In particular, we are reminded that the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the numerically smallest population, are leaving their ancestral lands in alarmingly large numbers, especially in Sarajevo and Posavina. Failure to accommodate their return is one of the main reasons behind this exodus.

**THEREFORE**, this Conference of Bosniak and Croat Americans, as US citizens, voters and taxpayers, calls upon the US State Department, EU political leaders, the UN Security Council and General Assembly, the Peace Implementation Council, the B&H Government, and all other concerned parties and individuals to:

1. Make null and void the currently imposed, unjust, and un-ratified Dayton Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
2. Affirm that it is in the national interest of the United States, in accordance with its freedom loving and democratic tradition, to support the noble cause of abolishing the “ethnically defined entities,” in particular “Republika Srpska,” which is the product of a war of aggression, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Bosnia and Herzegovina should once again become a unified, functional, and indivisible Republic under a single democratic constitution. It should become a state in which the government stimulates the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes, allocates adequate jobs to those returnees, and creates a state infrastructure based on each municipality’s pre-war ethnic level, as reflected in the 1991 census before ethnic cleansing drove them from their homes.
3. Make your intentions and projected outcomes more transparent, and include in the decision-making process positive, progressive, and well-intentioned groups, including the various civic associations and individuals within the country and outside of it. Extend this dialogue beyond the small number of party leaders to the general public in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to B&H refugees everywhere, including those in the United States.
4. Continue to demand from the Serb political leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina that they apprehend and prosecute their war criminals, especially Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, eliminate the influence of their mafia and the practice of wide-spread corruption, reject the mythology of Serb-victimization and the culture of hate and murder, which presents a perpetual threat to peace and prosperity in the entire region. Promote and support democratic parties and policies so that sufficient economic and political action can be taken to support US policies in the region.
5. Welcome and fully endorse the review and withdrawal of Ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey’s signature from the Dayton Accords, signed in Paris in December 1995. Furthermore, welcome and endorse his call to the other representatives and parties to the Dayton Accords - including the United States and European Union, as well as Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro - to do the same and to declare the Accords null and void in view of its regressive and tragic consequences in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its illegitimate standing as evidenced by the proceedings before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Court of Justice.
6. Urge the B&H authorities to renew their efforts in returning refugees to their homes, especially in “Republika Srpska,” where the most civilians were ethnically cleansed. Review and remedy the conditions that continue to cause civilians to leave, in particular

the departure of Bosnian Croats from Sarajevo and central B&H and Bosniaks from eastern B&H.

7. As the starting point, emphatically urge the peoples and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to return to the pre-war constitution - the only legally binding document and the basis on which B&H's independence was recognized after the March 1, 1992 referendum. Then, in proceeding with reforms, use the Swiss and US Constitutions, or other appropriate democratic constitutions, as working models for negotiating a new constitutional arrangement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This will safeguard the interests of the country, its peoples and all its citizens, and bring about a stable and just political system. It will guarantee the security, prosperity, and freedom of all peoples and citizens in the country, thereby allowing them to be responsible, proud, and productive members of a multinational and multicultural Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These changes will also allow B&H to meet all the requirements necessary to join the Euro-Atlantic family.
8. Finally, we respectfully request that as US citizens of B&H descent we have an opportunity to meet with the principal persons in the US State Department and National Security Council, who are in charge of the US policy regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina, to discuss our concerns before any final policy decisions are made, so that we can give our own input to help establish an appropriate venue for dialogue, and to help further and harmonize the interests of the United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **Section II.**

The Chicago Leadership Conference, with representatives from various Bosniak and Croat organizations and communities in this country, calls upon

### **THE POLITICAL LEADERS IN B&H TO:**

1. Pursue negotiations regarding a new constitution supported by functional and democratic institutions, with a commitment and also a clear understanding that within a reasonable and firmly defined time-line, the entities including "Republika Srpska" will be abolished in favor of a decentralized system based on democratic rather than ethnic considerations. This system should firmly guarantee to all citizens, protection, security, equal access to jobs, and equality before the law, and law enforcement agencies.
2. Reclaim the pre-war Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a starting point for a new constitution upon which new and functional state institutions will be built, while dismantling the currently unjust and complex political structures resulting from the Dayton Accords, which cannot legally or functionally serve as the beginning or end of efficient governance.
3. Assign the task of drafting a new constitution to the best experts in constitutional law in the country and abroad, and, therefore, depoliticize this vital process.

4. Negotiate with each other and the international community in good faith and sincerity to ensure the best interests of the people in the country.
5. Work for the general interest of all, regardless of nationality, religion or political affiliation, and rise above party politics and immediate personal or group gains.
6. Form a competent commission on the restitution of property, composed of judicial officers from each of the three constituent peoples, to adjudicate property losses and claims since the Second World War.
7. Revive and empower the Commission for Truth, Trust and Reconciliation for the purpose of addressing the crimes and injustices of the recent past, thus allowing still open wounds to start to heal.

#### B&H RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO:

1. Become decisive in preventing the use of religion for political and/or ideological purposes.
2. Raise your voices for truth and justice no matter who is involved.
3. Be true voices of peace and moral principles in the country by educating your own believers to respect others in a pluralistic, civil society.
4. Make every effort, through your pastoral collaborators and teachers of religion in the public schools, for Bosnia and Herzegovina to become a land of acceptance and mutual respect. Promote harmony between all people, regardless of faith and background. And may you do this in accord with the ancient Bosnian proverb “od Kulina bana i dobrijuh dana,” in other words, in remembrance of the good old days of Lord Kulin).

#### B&H CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, EDUCATORS, AND MEDIA TO:

1. Cultivate a culture of acceptance and respect.
2. Prevent your respective institutions from being instruments of ideology.
3. Teach people, especially the young, to rise to higher and wider horizons of culture and life by avoiding stereotyping and cultural isolationism.
4. Be guided by principles of scientific objectivity and the quest for truth, not by popularity and/or current ideological “needs.”
5. Be voices of reason, objective analysts and reporters, who sow the seeds of justice and equality to all.

6. Create open forums of dialogue with a higher level of open-mindedness.
7. Work for the general good and focus on the present and the future, instead of the past.

#### B&H PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL TO:

1. Make an effort to reconstruct human bridges, from person to person, family to family, and change your shared world for the better.
2. Welcome your former neighbors back home, instead of prolonging their misery and fear, for by doing that, you will also be healing your own heart and soul.
3. Prevent "incidents" against the "others" in your community, for only then would you become a true champion of peace.
4. Expose crimes, especially those committed against the "others" in your community and do not make excuses for them and for your own prejudices.
5. Call upon all the citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina to join us in the common effort of making needed reforms to the present constitution, so that all peoples and citizens of our common homeland may live in justice, peace, and equality. Emphasize our call to the Serb community and their organizations everywhere to join us in this effort.
6. Be proud of who you are, but respect and accept others, with all their attributes, as your equals. Support coexistence and living in peace and strive to build a better future together.

#### LEADERS IN THE REGION:

1. We call upon all the countries of the region to resolve their outstanding differences, to respect each state's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to promote cooperation in the effort to see all the countries become fully integrated, as equals, into the Euro-Atlantic family and its institutions.
2. As Bosniaks and Croats, we shall support efforts to resolve issues between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

Delegates of the Chicago Leadership Conference call upon all people of good will to support these noble efforts and to join us in achieving the above objectives which are in the best interest of all the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and are in accordance with the American tradition of freedom, democracy and justice for all. Pursuant to the request of the Chicago Leadership Conference, we are establishing the "Coalition of Croats and Bosniaks in Diaspora" for the

benefit of our two communities in the United States. We will work towards improving the relations of our two peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina and everywhere.

### **Section III.**

With unanimous approval from the following organizations and their delegates at the Chicago Leadership Conference:

Organizers of the Chicago Leadership Conference:

1. Becir Tanovic, President, Bosnian American Coordinating Committee, Lake Forest, IL
2. Dr. Ante Cuvalo, President, Alliance of Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lansing, IL

Organizations represented:

1. Alliance of Croats of Bosnia & Herzegovina
2. Association of Bosnjaks from Gacko
3. Association of Croatian Studies
4. BACA Women's Group
5. Bosniak American Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina
6. Bosnian American Coordinating Committee
7. Bosnian-American Cultural Association
8. Bosnian American Information Center
9. Bosnian-Herzegovinian Club of Chicago
10. Bosnian Islamic Community Center of Detroit
11. Bosnian Islamic Cultural Center
12. Congress of Bosniaks of North America
13. Croatian Academy of America
14. Croatian American Association
15. Croatian Catholic Union of the USA
16. Croatian Cultural Association "Napredak"
17. Croatian Franciscan Custody in the US & Canada
18. Croatian Fraternal Union of America
19. Islamic Cultural Center of Greater Chicago
20. I.A.B.N.A.
21. ICC Women's Group
22. Islamic Cultural Center of Greater Chicago
23. Islamic Un.& Cultural Center of New York
24. National Federation of Croatian Americans
25. SDA Chicago USA for B&H



Delegates:

1. Dr. Senad ef. Agic, Imam, Islamic Cult. Center of Gr. Chicago, Northbrook, IL
2. Hasan Avdich, Director, Bosnian American Cult. Assn., Chicago, IL
3. Tarik Bilalbegovic, Vice President, BAACB&H, Washington, DC
4. Joseph M. Brigich, Nat. Vice President, Croatian Fraternal Union. of America, Pitt., PA.
5. Steve Bubalo, Vice Pres., Alliance of Croats of B&H (proxy), Los Angeles, CA
6. Dr. Amir Buljina, Bosn. Amer. Inform. Center, Ann Arbor, MI
7. Harun Buljina, Bosnian American Information Center, Ann Arbor, MI
8. Prof. Amir Campara, Director, Bosnian Islamic Cultural Center, Chicago, IL
9. Prof. Ikica Cuvalo, Alliance of Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lansing, IL
10. Vehid Deumic, Manager, BAACB&H, Washington, DC
11. Fr. Nikola Dugandzic, Pastor, Al. Stepinac Croatian Parish, Chicago, IL
12. Prof. Mujko Erovic, Pres. Assembly, Cong. Bosn. North Amer., Chicago, IL
13. Fra Jozo Grbes, Pastor, St. Jerome Croatian Catholic Church, Chicago, IL
14. Prof. Aleksandar Hemon, Bosnian-Herzegovinian Club, Chicago, IL
15. Haris Hojkuric, Director, Bosn. Amer. Inf. Center, Chicago, IL
16. Prof. Dzemal Hot, President, Congress of Bosn. North America, New York
17. Haris Hromic, Dir., Foreign Affairs, BAACB&H, New York, N.Y.
18. Frank M. Jerbich, Vice Pres., National Fed. of Croatia Americans, Chicago, IL
19. Ivan Jureta, President, Croatian Cult. Association "Napredak," Chicago, IL
20. John Jurisic, President, Bosnian-Herzegovinian Club, Chicago, IL
21. Adna Karamelic, Director of Communic., BAACB&H, Washington, DC
22. Kemal ef. Karic, Imam, President, SDA Chicago, Chicago, IL
23. Josip Knezevic, President, Croatian Cult. Association "Napredak," (proxy), New York
24. Mesud Kulauzovic, President, Bosn. Amer. Cult. Assn., Northbrook, IL
25. Dzafer Kulenovic, President, Islamic Cultural Center of Gr. Chi., Chicago, IL
26. Ivan Kutlesa, AIA, NCARB, Young Croatians, Chicago, IL
27. Tomislav Kuzmanovic, Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, Croatians in Milwaukee, WI
28. Prof. Melkior Masina, National Pres., Croatian Catholic Union of USA, (proxy) Hobart, Ind.
29. Dr. Ana Misetec, Vice Pres., Croatian American Association, Chicago, IL
30. Kresimir Misetec, Sec., Alliance of Croats of B&H, Chicago, IL
31. Bayram ef. Mulic, Imam, Islamic Un.& Cultural Center, New York, N.Y.
32. Prof. Vedran Nazor, Pres., Croatian Academy of America, (proxy), New York
33. Fra Marko Puljic, Custos, Croatian Franciscan Custody in US& Can., IL
34. Prof. Marko Puljic, Croatian Cult. Association "Napredak," St. Louis, MO
35. Muaz ef. Redzic, Secretary, I.A.B.N.A., Nashville, Tennessee
36. Prof. Ivan Ante Runac, Sec., Association for Croatian Studies, Ann Arbor, MI
37. Amb. Muhamed Sacirbey, Bosnian American Inform.Center, New York, N.Y.
38. Dr. Nedzib Sacirbey, Bosn. American Inf. Center, Falls Church, Virginia

39. Susan Sacirbey, Bosnian American Information Center, New York, N.Y.
40. Safet Sarich, Bosnian American Information Center, Chicago, IL
41. Prof. Sanja Seferovic Drnovsek, Bosnian-Herzegovinian Club of Chicago, IL
42. Dr. Mensur O. Sunje, Director, Bosnian Amer. Inf. Center, Chicago, IL
43. Nedime Tanovic, President, ICC Women's Group, Northbrook, IL
44. Dr. Edisa Tokovic, Bosnian Islamic Community, Detroit, MI
45. Prof. Rudi Tomic, Vice President, Alliance of Croats of B&H for Canada
46. Saban Torlo, Vice Pres., Bosnian Amer. Cult. Assn., Chicago, IL
47. Arif Zulic, Sec. Gen., Council of Congr. Bosn. Intel., Sarajevo, B&H
48. Ing. Suljo Zvizdic, Director, Assn. of Bosnjaks from Gacko, Skokie, IL