

# Press Release

## Parliamentary Assembly Communication Unit

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### Constitutional change in Bosnia and Herzegovina 'imperative', says PACE President

Strasbourg, 07.07.2006 – René van der Linden, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), has urged Bosnia and Herzegovina's parliamentarians to restart discussions immediately after the October general elections on constitutional reform which would progressively replace the mechanisms of "ethnic representation" with "representation based on the civic principle". He said that such a change of system, while difficult, was "imperative".

"The Dayton Peace Agreement was a ceasefire that stopped the war, but it is not enough to address the generally recognised need to strengthen state institutions which are currently too weak to allow for the further integration of BiH into Europe.

"We sincerely hope and believe that the politicians who emerge from the upcoming elections will have the courage and the political will to go beyond sectarian political divides and put the interests of citizens first," he said in an address to both Chambers of the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo today.

"Countries like yours, which aspire to join the family, should adopt and abide by the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. They are the basic pre-conditions for lasting peace, stability and sustainable economic growth," he said.

He also urged parliamentarians to adopt the draft higher education law and abandon continued discrimination based on ethnic origin. "The quality of education is of utmost importance for the future generations of your country.

"You have chosen to be a member of the Council of Europe, you want to become a member of the EU, and therefore you should respect your commitments and obligations. We are your partners in this process, ready to assist you, but it is your responsibility to meet these obligations," the Parliamentary Assembly President said.

He stressed the importance of bringing war criminals to justice and recalled that there was no constitutional basis for a secession referendum in Republika Srpska.

Finally Mr van der Linden insisted that [PACE Resolution 1513 on constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), adopted last week, was a major political message addressed to all responsible politicians and citizens in BiH.

### [Speech](#)

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 315 members from the national parliaments of the 46 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).