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**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND
OVERSIGHT**

Fulfilling the Promise of Peace:

Human Rights, Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and Bosnia

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Statement by

Amb. (ret.) Kurt D. Volker

Chairman Carnahan, Ranking member Rohrabacher, distinguished Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Committee.

I find the topic of this hearing very interesting -- peace in Northern Ireland and peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina -- because it immediately brings up the contrast in the results achieved in addressing these two former conflict zones.

In the case of Northern Ireland, we see a successful peace agreement, a functioning Executive, and a promising future -- though challenges of course remain.

Most worrying in Northern Ireland is the rise of a small number of new, violent groups who are relatively unknown, and who are taking advantages of frustrations built out of

economic downturn. Nonetheless, the basic structures of the peace agreement and of governance remain intact, and they enjoy the support of both religious communities, of young people, of community leaders, and of course the UK and Irish governments.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, violence stopped nearly 15 years ago, and yet we still continue to see great challenges in governance and reconciliation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the future remains cloudy.

Although upcoming elections provide another opportunity for progress, past experience has been disappointing. For several years, we have seen political stagnation, if not outright backtracking: weak state institutions and governance, expressions of ethnic nationalism and separatism, and continued day-to-day divisions among the three main communities.

With these dramatically different results, it is worth looking at whether any lessons can be learned from the two different peace processes that could guide the role of the international community, and particularly the United States, today.

To give you a bit of my personal background: I worked on Northern Ireland as an official in the National Security Council from 2001 to 2005, and as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs from 2005 to 2008.

I first worked on Bosnia in 1993 as a Special Assistant to Amb. Reginald Bartholomew, the first U.S. Special Envoy for Bosnia Peace Negotiations. I continued to be involved with Bosnia, and the Balkans more generally, as an officer at the U.S. Embassy in Budapest, Hungary, from 1994 to 1997; as Deputy Director of the Private Office of NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson from 1999 to 2001, as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, and then as Ambassador to NATO from 2008 to 2009.

Drawing on these experiences, let me outline what I see as a few of the key differences between the two conflicts. In doing so, it is clear that while there are many indigenous factors affecting the two regions that cannot be changed, there are also some factors which we can change, and on which the international community and United States should continue to focus.

First, and most obviously, is the scale of the conflict itself from which these societies must now recover. While the conflict in Northern Ireland was indeed terrible, it was not on the same scale as the all-out war in Bosnia – whether in terms of the size of population affected, the size of territory affected, the numbers killed or displaced, or the brutality of concentration camps and ethnic cleansing. This clearly cannot be changed, and contributes to making reconciliation in Bosnia an extremely difficult challenge.

Second, in Northern Ireland, there was a palpable public fatigue with the violence and divisions in the Province. There emerged a public demand for change and reconciliation. This is only partially true in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as some groups still prefer separation, and public demands to end divisions and advance reconciliation

remain relatively weak. This means that the peace process in Northern Ireland has been one where *the parties* have been directly engaged in creating peace and reconciliation, whereas in Bosnia the process remains one that is largely driven by the *international community*, often with little investment by the parties themselves. This public sentiment can evolve, but it will follow improvements in other areas.

Third, and an area that can move public attitudes, is the economy. Northern Ireland enjoyed a sustained period of economic improvement leading up to the power-sharing agreement. This was due in part to support from the UK and Irish governments; in part to support from the United States and the European Union; and in part to the fact that Northern Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, was itself a part of the EU, giving its people access to investment, jobs, export markets, and ease of travel. The result was that with an improving economy, the people of Northern Ireland became stakeholders in creating an increasingly stable, well-governed, and prosperous society.

By contrast, Bosnia's economy has improved relatively slowly, is still lagging, and remains outside the European Union. A renewed focus not merely on aid, but on spurring genuine economic growth through access to markets and investment, business development, easing of travel, and an increasingly open relationship with the EU leading ultimately to membership, can make a critical difference in Bosnia.

Fourth, is the role of the indigenous NGO community. In Northern Ireland, diverse groups ranging from educators to businessmen to human rights activists to social workers to former police officers all came together across religious divides to expose past abuses, build cooperation, and develop the structures of a more integrated society. While the NGO community in Bosnia and Herzegovina has grown and carries out vitally important work, it has yet to achieve a sufficiently broad-based impact to create the societal underpinnings of an integrated society. This is therefore another area where more can be done – by NGO's within Bosnia, and by outside actors such as the United States and EU in supporting them.

Fifth is the positive political support and the facilitating role played by the two key governments – in London and Dublin – to advance the peace process and create and empower a functioning, unified Executive in Northern Ireland.

By contrast, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been caused in part by the actions of neighboring states. Their later support for the peace process, reconciliation and unified governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina was initially weak, growing only with time. While they are now far more supportive – including the Serbian government – there is still room for Bosnia's neighbors to more proactively support peace and reconciliation. This is again something that the United States and European Union can encourage.

In addition, the fact that Northern Ireland, when not administered by a local power-sharing arrangement, defaulted to being administered directly by London also created a vital level of basic governance. In Bosnia, there was no such cushion.

Sixth is the quality of the governing agreements themselves. The Good Friday Agreement, and its subsequent implementation through devolved government, has proven to be a workable model of governance, allowing for the fair and proper execution of executive responsibilities. Not without hiccups, of course – but overall a success.

By contrast, while the importance of the Dayton Accords in ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be overstated, as a governing arrangement, the constitutional arrangements that have flowed from Dayton have helped prolong ethnic divisions and political stalemate. Multiple efforts to introduce constitutional reforms aimed at strengthening governance and integration have met with firm resistance, and have thus never gone far enough to create an effective central government. Improving governing arrangements should remain a priority for the United States and the international community in promoting long-term peace and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Seventh, the engagement of the United States and international community in Northern Ireland proved to be both consistent and effective. Partly, this was due to the leadership of the UK and Irish governments and the parties themselves. Partly, it was due to the continued attention and priority given to Northern Ireland in the United States, including from the business community and Congress. From the Clinton Administration through the Bush Administration and into the tenure of President Obama, the United States has remained engaged, contributed positively diplomatically where possible, and provided key financial and business community support.

Equally, the engagement of the international community was non-bureaucratic, and did not supplant the responsibility of the parties themselves for achieving peace, integration, and reconciliation.

In Bosnia, none of these characteristics of international community engagement applied. On the one hand, because of the nature of the conflict, there was a requirement for a substantial peacekeeping presence and international High Representative, and the international community assumed a far more direct role in governing.

Yet on the other hand, the international community has blown hot and cold on Bosnia. In the early days of the war, the United States kept a distance and European powers attempted to manage the conflict, ultimately unsuccessfully, through the UN's UNPROFOR mission.

After the Srebrenica massacre, the international community, led by the United States, engaged massively, with both the Dayton process and the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR). While this level of engagement persisted for several years, the international community eventually lost steam. NATO ended the SFOR mission in 2004, handing over to the EU, without fundamental progress on reconciliation. Today, the EU force now stands at around 700 soldiers and is shrinking, and the EU is now considering ending the role of the High Representative – again without genuine

progress on ending political stalemate and on advancing national reconciliation. A more consistent international engagement, with an eye on the long-term, is warranted.

Eighth, a key role was played by the International Commission on Decommissioning – taking weapons away from those who might use them, destroying them, and in doing so increasing public confidence that the political institutions being created would be effective. In Bosnia, we have never fully achieved integration of arms – both defense and police – under the sole responsibility of the State.

Ninth, the international financial assistance provided to Northern Ireland was much more effective than that provided to Bosnia – largely because of many of the above-mentioned factors. In Northern Ireland, we contributed within the framework of an essentially well-functioning economic and political structure. In Bosnia, that structure was lacking, meaning that international support never achieved equivalent results.

Tenth, there is the specific role played by the United States. In both cases, the role of the United States has been vital, and has been welcomed by the parties themselves. Yet again there were differences.

In Northern Ireland, the United States played a direct mediating role at an early stage, and then an active and substantial supporting role, with the UK, Ireland and the parties in Northern Ireland themselves taking the lead. Northern Ireland had the direct engagement of President Clinton in concluding the Good Friday Agreement, and President Bush also remained personally engaged in following through. Both Presidents named senior Special Envoys to maintain U.S. engagement on a day-to-day basis. Congress was also directly involved, both politically, and in providing economic assistance through the International Fund for Ireland, which played a critical role.

In Bosnia, the U.S. initially stayed out, seeing this as a purely European issue. Then we engaged massively, both diplomatically and militarily. After a time, we again reduced our engagement in favor of a greater EU role. The inconsistency in U.S. engagement has not helped Bosnia in the long-run, and the EU alone has never proved an adequate substitute for the U.S. and EU working together.

Mr. Chairman, that is my summary of some of the key similarities and differences between the two peace and reconciliation processes.

As I noted at the outset, some of the factors that were helpful in Northern Ireland are simply not present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and these cannot be changed. But there are nonetheless some areas where we can bring about change in Bosnia, and where we should strive to do better.

These include:

- Greater emphasis on economic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, internally but also in association with ever-closer ties to the European;

- Greater support for indigenous, integration-minded NGO's within Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Encouraging even more active support for reconciliation – and discouragement of separatism – from Bosnia's neighbors;
- Continued efforts to advance constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to improve the basic effectiveness of governing structures;
- More consistent, long-term engagement by the international community in Bosnia, rather than a continued pattern of premature disengagement;
- Continued efforts to reduce the role of any arms (defense or police) not under the State itself;
- Maintaining a prominent U.S. leadership role within the international community's efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, not seeking to abandon this solely to the EU to manage.

The challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain enormous. But the vision of a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Balkans region – including Bosnia and Herzegovina – which is fully integrated into the mainstream of Europe is both worthy and achievable.

The lesson of Northern Ireland is that even the most bitter of conflicts can be overcome with the right efforts, and that sustained U.S. engagement remains vital. I submit that we should apply some of the lessons learned there to improve our efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these observations with you today, and I look forward to addressing any questions you may have.

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