



PM
April 2nd

**PERMANENT MISSION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT

by

**H.E. Mr. Miloš Prica, Ambassador at large
the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina
at
52nd Session of Commission on Population and Development**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

New York

1-5 April 2019

At the outset let me congratulate you Mr. Chairman on your assumption to this important task and wish you every success. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary General for his comprehensive report on this essential topic.

After achieving moderate results in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, Bosnia and Herzegovina has started the preparation for the SDGs Agenda 2030 in a much more comprehensive way. In recent two and a half years enormous efforts have been made in order to have on board governments at all the levels as well as other stakeholders as many as possible. The activities have been streamlined with a very fruitful cooperation with the UN Country Team. Agenda 2030 goals and targets are now incorporated into many strategic documents dealing with the development issues. Bosnia and Herzegovina is going to present its first Voluntary National Review on the implementation of SDGs at the HLPF to be held in New York in July 2019.

During the last three decades, my country has passed through a very significant demographic changes, and unfortunately, the trend has continued to be negative throughout the whole period.

According to the last census in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2013, population was 3,5 million, almost 20% down from the 1991 census. Before the war in Bosnia we had permanent yearly increase of the population by average 36000. Nowadays, Bosnia has an average decrease of the number of inhabitants by 5000 yearly, according to the official statistics. Many unofficial estimates are far more pessimistic. Large number of people are leaving the country, but still keeping their domestic identity cards, and by doing so, they remain to be counted officially as they are still residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is making an accurate statistics more difficult.

Besides that, we are facing continual ageing of the population and very significant number of skillful and highly educated people leaving the country for economic reasons. Before the war, we had 6,5% of the people age 65 and over, but according to the latest census in 2013 this number had increased to 15%. Children comprised 23,5% of the overall population in 1991, in 2013 only 14%. It is not hard to conclude that the situation has worsen. The estimates today, 5 years after the last census, are showing further deterioration of the process.

Unfortunately, the fertility rate has continued to be very low, among the lowest in the world (approximately 1,3 per mil), for a very long period of time. The population growth has been negative throughout the last decade, and so far the policy dealing with this issue with an intention to slow down, stop and reverse the trend is not bringing satisfactory results.

Today we have 746 thousand employees and 666 thousand people retired. This ratio may jeopardize the sustainability of the whole pension and health care system. The trend continuous to show the rise of the number of people suffering from non-communicable diseases, like in most of European states, and life expectancy is around 77 years of age.

Besides that, Bosnia and Herzegovina is already facing a lack of trained and qualified medical staff, because they are leaving the country for better salary to developed parts of Europe and beyond. The process has accelerated in recent couple of years.

At the moment we do not have precise data regarding the number of highly educated and skilled people leaving the country, but their number is increasing every year. Most of those people belong to the younger and middle age generation. This issue should be tackled very seriously at the regional level not only nationally in order to at least slow down the process before any kind of improvement or reversal of the trend could be achieved. Migration of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens is obviously

statistically insufficiently measured and available data are underestimating the situation. It is still hard to confirm whether those migrations are cyclical or permanent and at what extent. In the very near future it might have devastating consequences to the whole region, not only to Bosnia.

Regarding illegal migration into the country, after avoiding the main wave of migrants at the peak of the crisis passing through the so called Western Balkans route in 2015 and 2016, more significant number of migrants has started to reach Bosnia and Herzegovina's soil in late 2017 and 2018, continuing the trend in the first three months of the current year. For the whole 2018 some 24000 illegal migrants passed through the territory of the country, most of them without documents. Our authorities are monitoring the situation assisted by the representatives of IOM, and now it is very hard to predict how it will develop in the near and midterm future, as well as which kind of impact might happen in various parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Many aspects of life, quality of infrastructure, and all kind of services in the country should be upgraded significantly if we want to reverse the whole process of the outflow of our own citizens. We are deeply convinced that during the implementation of the SDG Agenda 2030, we will be able to improve the demographic situation. Bosnia and Herzegovina will especially draw the attention to the needs of the most vulnerable groups, like people with disabilities, those living in remote rural areas, especially women and children, Roma population etc. Leaving no one behind is the most important goal.

Thank you for your attention.