

**Conclusions of the Roundtable:
"Croatian-Slovenian Discussions:
Relations between Croatia and Slovenia - Challenges and perspectives "**

Zagreb, February 17, 2009

The Political Science Research Centre, Zagreb and the Scientific Forum, Zagreb, with the support of the European Movement Croatia, have organised a roundtable discussion on the relations between Croatia and Slovenia on Tuesday, 17th of February, 2009, at the European House Zagreb. The participants of the event were representatives of the Croatian and Slovenian academic community. In a text below we deliver conclusions and recommendations agreed among the participants which the organizers will submit to the governments and relevant bodies of the two neighbouring countries, as well as to the representatives of the European Union.

While Croatia and Slovenia do not have a record of historical disagreements, in recent times unresolved bilateral issues have led the two states to the edge of mutual conflict. These issues do not only burden the political relations among the two states and impose economic costs upon its citizens, but also create a general atmosphere of hostility and distrust in the public and media of both countries. These problems can have long-term implications and call the good neighbourly relations between two countries in question, as well as have an adverse effect on the security situation in the region. The participants therefore emphasise the need for an ongoing and active effort in finding a way out of this situation.

The participants have suggested various ways of solving the border dispute, among others an international judicial process based on the principles of international law, mediation and conciliation. Participants from Croatia advocated the use of an international court decision inside a framework of international law, while the Slovenian participants offered models of mediation and conciliation which would include arguments beyond those of the international law. The common view on solving the dispute could not be reached, nor an agreement on the question whether the resolution of the dispute should be based on primarily legal and /or other

arguments, such as fairness. Furthermore, it was not possible to achieve a consensus about the need to separate the bilateral problems between the two countries from the process of Croatian accession to the European Union. Croatian participants were requesting the separation of these two issues, while the opinion of the Slovenian participants was that they cannot be completely separated. However, all the participants agreed that the current political atmosphere in both countries is not favourable for an adequate resolution of disputes and that the key task of the political elites is to work on the creation of a more positive public climate.

Primarily, the politicians of both countries are invited to refrain from giving premature, rash statements which only further complicate the current situation, as well as to avoid hostile rhetoric in order to prevent a long-term deterioration of mutual relations. The attention was drawn to the important role which regional cooperation within the Euroregions of the Adriatic, the Alps-Adriatic Working Community and Central European Initiative and other relevant bodies may have in resolving bilateral disagreements. Furthermore, there should be more encouragement for student and scientific exchange between two countries within European programmes. Finding a definite solution to the question of the debt of Ljubljanska banka to Croatian savers could also create more a favourable atmosphere in mutual relations.

In addition, the participants suggested a more active role of the academic community in the promotion of solving Croatian-Slovenian bilateral problems, either through similar roundtables, advisory work or the bilateral commissions. A positive role of the Croatian-Slovenian Historical Commission was stressed out, whose work has not yet been sufficiently presented to the public. Also, a bilateral commission of Slovenian and Italian historians, who have presented their conclusions to public through collections of essays, has been pointed out. The Croatian-Slovenian Historical Commission could also follow this example and thus give a positive impulse to future discussions.

Furthermore, the media are called upon to work towards mending the negative image of Croatia in the Slovenian public and of Slovenia in Croatian public. In order to reduce tension and enhance the cultural dialogue, it has been suggested a greater involvement of civil society, NGOs, cultural initiatives, as well as the Catholic Church and other religious communities and people of good will in Slovenia and Croatia, but also the Croatian minority in Slovenia and the Slovenian minority in Croatia.

The roundtable conclusions were worked out and signed by:

1. mr. sc. Zijad Bećirović, Director of the International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES), Ljubljana
2. doc. dr. sc. Milan Brglez, Head of Department of International Relations, President of Slovenian Political Science Society, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana
3. prof. dr. sc. Silvo Devetak, Head of the Department of International Law and International Relations, Faculty of Law, Maribor and Director of the European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies
4. prof. dr. sc. Damir Grubiša, Faculty of Political Science, Head of the Centre for European Studies, Zagreb
5. prof. dr. Vladimir Ibler, Professor Emeritus of Law, member of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences
6. dr. sc. Jozef Kunič, President of the Slovenian Society for International Relations (SDMO), Ljubljana
7. prof. dr. sc. Anđelko Milardović, Senior Scientist at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, Zagreb, Professor at the Croatian Studies, Zagreb and Director of the Political Science Research Centre, Zagreb
8. prof. dr. sc. Janko Prunk, Department of Theoretical Analytical Politics, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana
9. dr. sc. Višnja Samardžija, Head of the Department for European Integration, Institute for International Relations, Zagreb
10. dr. sc. Mladen Staničić, Director of the Institute for International Relations, Zagreb

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1. President of the Republic of Croatia
2. President of the Government of the Republic of Croatia
3. Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations of the Republic of Croatia
4. State Secretary for European Integration of the Republic of Croatia
5. President of Croatian Parliament
6. President of the Republic of Slovenia
7. President of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia
8. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia
9. President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia
10. President of the Commission of the European Union
11. European Union Commissioner for Enlargement
12. President of the Czech Presidency of the European Union
13. President of the European Parliament
14. Secretary General of the North Atlantic Territory Alliance
15. Ambassadors of European Union Member States in the Republic of Croatia
16. Head of the European Commission Delegation in the Republic of Croatia
17. Ambassadors of European Union Member States in the Republic of Slovenia