

Commonwealth to be prepared to lift the suspension of Nigerian membership, and to end all sanctions, when the new democratic government has been formed -- but not before.

4. Europe: The Yugoslav Dilemma:

Lead Speaker: John Graham, Former Senior Elections Officer for OSCE in Bosnia

(Rapporteur's Summary)

The discussion group focused on Bosnia but not the crises in other parts of Yugoslavia, more particularly the Kosovo region.

The group heard that three years after the Dayton accord, there has at least been no resumption of hostilities and no terrorist activities. Economic progress is evident in some regions but not the Serb sector. But the elections were called far too soon, in 1996, as part of the American exit strategy in connection with the 1996 presidential election in the U.S. It was a terribly unrealistic calendar.

Ethnic-based parties and their media were aggressive, abusive and selective in 1996, but improved later under pressure and sanctions from the international community. Police conduct has changed becoming more professional. It is remarkable that there has been no outbreak of terrorism.

The fundamental objective of Dayton was the reintegration of society, but there are still huge numbers of refugees; only a trickle have gone back to areas where they would be an ethnic minority.

In the elections of September 1998, the ruling parties have consolidated control in every area. They don't believe in multiparty democracy. The parties come from an authoritarian background and are based on ethnicity. In short, there were too many elections and they served to entrench hardline people in power. Heavy-handed leadership representing the United States and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) sought to swing the vote in the September elections in Republika Serbska with promises and threats, playing into the hands of the hardliners who won. Now the West will have to accept uncomfortable democratic results.

Recalling Srebrenica: 8,000 men and boys were taken out and executed. Srebrenica was 74 percent Muslim before the war, now is 100 percent Serb. Unemployment in the town is 70 to 80 percent; it is a depressed, miserable area. Most of the mass graves have been emptied and their contents hidden from the international community. There is zero interest in the return of any former Muslim residents.

(Summary of group report to plenary)

Although elections in the Serb sector of Bosnia have not favoured the candidates backed by the West, the group considered that Western authorities have no alternative but to recognize the people's choices. Unconditional humanitarian aid should be provided, not withheld from regions opposed to the Dayton formula.

There should be no let-up in the effort to apprehend war criminals and bring them to trial. Bosnians should be given more responsibility for their elections, which have been largely conducted by the OSCE, and running their own affairs in general; but the SFOR (Stabilization Force), including the Canadian contingent, should remain in place to encourage stability. More effective coordination is needed between the international organizations and the NGOs. One way and another, the situation in the Balkans, including Kosovo, illustrates the limits of soft power.