

Bosnia and Herzegovina and the US

The development of relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United States has been constructive and stable. The United States recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina on April 8, 1992. Diplomatic relations were established on June 18, 1993. The Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Washington D.C. opened soon after.

The United States is one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's most important international partners.

The 1992-95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended with the crucial participation of the United States in brokering the 1995 Dayton Accords. After leading the diplomatic and military effort to secure the Dayton Agreement, the United States has continued to lead the effort to ensure its implementation. U.S. troops participated in the Bosnia Peacekeeping force and the United States has donated hundreds of millions of dollars to assist with reconstruction, humanitarian assistance, economic development and military reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has played a large role in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, including programs in economic development and reform, democratic reform (media, elections), infrastructure development and training programs for Bosnian professionals, amongst others. Additionally, there are many American non-governmental organizations that have likewise played a significant role in the reconstruction and state building processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The bilateral relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and The United States are characterized by efficient practical cooperation in the areas defense, counter-terrorism as well as crime prevention.

Regional co-operation

Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in regional co-operation through the Stability Pact, Central-European Initiative (CEI), Southeast Europe Co-operation Initiative (SECI), Southeast Europe Co-operation Process (SEECF), Adriatic-Ionic Initiative (AII) and others.

Defense co-operation

Co-operation is based on friendship between our Countries and especially on the professional relationship between our Armed Forces. There has been co-operation in:

- Bilateral agreements
- State Partnership Program
- Defense reform
- International military operations

Realization of a number of specific tasks within these areas critically supported Bosnia and Herzegovina's ability to build national capacities and capabilities that resulted with an invitation to join NATO's Partnership for Peace program at the Riga Summit.

In December 2006, the US Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Hon. Gordon England during the Armed Forces Day Reception at the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina delivered a speech that stated the following:

"Let me assure you, America remains committed to an on-going long term partnership. Though it changes in character, it will only grow in strength, as we move toward a more traditional bilateral military relationship, like those America enjoys with other NATO aspirant countries in Europe."

For more information on defense co-operation visit the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina web site www.mod.gov.ba

Economic relations

The United States is an important economic partner for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina's top

economic priorities are: acceleration of EU integration by concluding the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA); strengthening the fiscal system; public administration reform; World Trade Organization (WTO) membership; and securing economic growth by fostering a dynamic, competitive private sector.

Bosnia and Herzegovina started accession negotiations with the EU in November 2005 and wide ranging political, social and economic reforms have already been accomplished. Bosnia and Herzegovina's accelerated economic reform process has greatly improved the business climate and the country has the fastest growing economy in South Eastern Europe.

The economy has grown at a steady pace of 5% per year since 2000, a trend that is expected to be maintained in the future. This sustained annual increase of GDP, combined with rapidly rising production levels and export volumes, provides a clear indicator that the economy is in full expansion.

The stability of the convertible mark – Bosnia and Herzegovina's currency – further contributes to a favorable business climate in the country. The KM is pegged to the Euro with a fixed exchange rate (1 KM = 0, 51 EUR).

A combination of the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Currency Board and fiscal discipline has kept the underlying inflation rate the lowest in the region. In 2005, inflation was 2.9%; high by Bosnia and Herzegovina's standards but only slightly higher than the one prevailing in the Euro-zone (2.2%). The introduction of VAT at the beginning of 2006 passed successfully with inflationary pressures maintained well under control.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is accelerating the privatization process for companies of strategic importance in order to increase economic growth and enhance the volume of foreign investment.

Trade

Bosnia and Herzegovina has signed a number of free trade agreements with neighboring countries and is negotiating its entry into CEFTA and the WTO. Companies operating in the country further benefit from the preferential trade regime with the Europe Union. This agreement allows for all goods that fulfill EU standards to be exported to each of the 25 member states without quantitative restrictions and free of customs or other duties, until the end of 2010. Besides the EU, Bosnia and Herzegovina has preferential export regimes with countries such as Canada, Japan, Russia, Turkey and the USA; the full, up-to-date, list is available on FIPA's website.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's main export articles to the United States:

- Wood and wood products
- Equipment
- Textiles

Bosnia and Herzegovina's main import articles from the United States:

- Animal or Vegetable Fats, Oil products
- Machinery and equipment
- Optical, measuring and medical instruments

TOURISM

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a top performer in recent years in terms of tourism development. Tourist arrivals have grown by an average of 24% annually from 1995 to 2000 (360,758 in 2002). According to an estimation of the World Tourism Organization, Bosnia and Herzegovina will have the third highest tourism growth rate in the world between 1995 and 2020.

Sarajevo, the nation's capital, was named by the travel publication Lonely Planet as the 43rd Best City in the World, in its Best Cities Book. With its #43 spot, Sarajevo comes ahead of Dubrovnik (#59), Ljubljana (#84), Bled at (#90), Zagreb at (#125) and Belgrade (#143), making Sarajevo the best ranking city on the Balkan peninsula. Sarajevo was named by Lonely Planet as a "Top 10 must-see" city in 2010. Other cities in the top 10 include Abu Dhabi, Istanbul,

Kyoto, and Vancouver.

Cultural relations

People from Bosnia and Herzegovina tour the United States with their performances, ranging from modern music to Bosnian Sevdalinke, a type of Bosnian folklore music, providing an opportunity for many to enjoy. Bosnian culture has been presented by many artists and musicians in the United States.

Bosnian films have gained US and international acclaim: most notably No Man's Land. Danis Tanovic, the acclaimed Bosnian film director and screenwriter, is best known for having directed and written the script for the 2001 Bosnian movie No Man's Land, which gained numerous awards, including the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2001. Tanovic was presented the Oscar by John Travolta and Sharon Stone. He ended his acceptance speech by saying, "This is for my country, Bosnia", expressing his devotion and patriotism to his country.

Bosnia has a rich culture, including poets such as Mak Dizdar and Abdulah Sidran; writers such as Dzevad Karahasan, Aleksandar Hemon, Miljenko Jergovic, Dario Dzamonja and Nedžad Ibrsimovic. Ivo Andrić won the Nobel Prize for Literature, while Vladimir Prelog won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1975.

Since its founding in 2003, the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival (BHFF) has attracted significant public attention in New York City, the Tri-State area and beyond. This vibrant cultural event, organized annually in New York City by two non-profit organizations, brings together a wide spectrum of the New York audiences, such as film enthusiasts from all walks of life, as well as the Bosnian-American community proud of its cultural heritage. The Bosnian-Herzegovinian Film Festival (BHFF) represents and celebrates contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian cinematography.

The United States has offered opportunities to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate in different (academic) training programs, among them the Fulbright Science and Technology Programme, Fulbright visiting scholar Programme, Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, Junior Faculty Development Programme and Youth Leadership Programme. There are more and more Bosnians and Herzegovinians who have graduated from reputable US universities and their postgraduate programs, thus raising the development potential of Bosnia and Herzegovina and contributing to a better understanding between the two countries.

Bosnians in the USA

The Bosnian Community in the USA has a long and distinguished history dating back one hundred years. According to Embassy estimates there are some 350,000 people of Bosnian origins living in the United States. The traditional centers of residence and culture for people from Bosnia and Herzegovina are situated on the East Coast (Atlanta, Jacksonville, New York) and the Mid-West (St. Louis, Chicago).

The United States has numerous Bosnian and Herzegovinian cultural, sport and religious associations. Bosnian language newspapers and other periodicals are published in many states; the largest in the United States is St. Louis' SABAH. - See more at: <http://bhembassy.org/bihandus.html#sthash.wPpi9XM6.dpuf>