



SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE:

"Instrumentalization and Politicization of National Rights: The 'All-Serbian Assembly' Declaration as a Continuity of Expansionist State Policy"

CONCLUSIONS





**Conclusions and recommendations from the scientific conference
“Instrumentalization and Politicization of National Rights: The ‘All-Serbian Assembly’
Declaration as a Continuity of Expansionist State Policy”**

Organized by the University of Sarajevo – Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law, held on January 9, 2025, at the Rectorate of the University of Sarajevo

The Declaration on the Protection of National and Political Rights and the Common Future of the Serbian People (the ‘All-Serbian Assembly’ Declaration) was adopted on June 8, 2024, in Belgrade by the President of the Republic of Serbia and the President of Republika Srpska, as well as by the presidents, vice presidents, and members of the governments of the Republic of Serbia and Republika Srpska, the presidents, vice presidents, and deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, with the blessing, prayerful support, and assembly participation of His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of the Serbian Orthodox Church, along with hierarchs and clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The “All-Serbian Assembly”, conceptualized as a “supranational” body bringing together Serbian political, religious, and academic representatives from the Republic of Serbia and the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity of Republika Srpska, points to a trend toward centralizing national policies outside the institutional framework of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The institutionalization of the concept of the “Serbian World” is aimed at creating a homogeneous space through the alignment of national identity, with significant roles assigned to symbolic, cultural, and educational elements, as well as the energy and transportation sectors. This strategy seeks to further homogenize the territories of Serbia and the smaller Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity of Republika Srpska through institutional and infrastructural connectivity. The adoption and implementation of the Declaration provide institutional backing to these expansionist ideological frameworks, posing a threat to regional stability, undermining the peacebuilding process, and further compromising the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Declaration was approved by the National Assembly of Republika Srpska (published in the “Official Gazette of Republika Srpska,” No. 64/24), and during the adoption process, the National Assembly also passed resolutions to commemorate January 9 (as the Day of the Republic and its patron saint’s day) and February 15 (as the Day of All-Serbian Statehood). To implement the Declaration, the National Assembly adopted a series of laws, by-laws, memorandums, and agreements. Some of these include:

- *The Law on Amendments to the Law on the Use of the Flag, Coat of Arms, and Anthem of Republika Srpska* (on December 30, 2024, the Constitutional Court of Republika Srpska determined that this law does not violate the vital interests of the Bosniak people) and the *Law on Amendments to the Law on Implementation of Decisions of the Commission for the Protection of National Monuments* established under Annex 8 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both adopted during the 11th regular session of Republika Srpska, concluded on November 5, 2024.
- *The Resolution on the Formation of a Committee for the Celebration of Republika Srpska Day*, adopted by the National Assembly of Republika Srpska on November 28, 2024.

- The *Rulebook on the Curriculum for Primary Education* (“Official Gazette of Republika Srpska,” No. 77/24) and the *Rulebook on Co-financing Scientific Research Projects* (“Official Gazette of Republika Srpska,” No. 97/24).
- The *Decision of the Government of Republika Srpska on the Approval of the Spending Plan for the Ministry of Labor and Veterans-Disability Protection for the period January 1–September 30, 2024*, allocating a total of 500,000 KM for the construction and maintenance of monuments, memorial sites, and military cemeteries related to the anti-fascist and liberation struggle of the 20th century and the Defensive Homeland War of Republika Srpska.
- The *Roadmap for Enhancing Bilateral Cooperation between Serbia and Republika Srpska in Mining and Energy*, approved by the Government of Republika Srpska on October 24, 2024, currently awaiting formal signing.
- The *Memorandum of Cooperation in the Field of Transfusion and Transplantation Medicine* between the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Republika Srpska and the Ministry of Health of Serbia, approved by the Government of Republika Srpska on September 26, 2024.
- The *Memorandum on Scientific and Technological Cooperation* between the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of Serbia and the Ministry of Scientific-Technological Development and Higher Education of Republika Srpska, along with the *Memorandum on Cooperation in Higher Education* between the Ministry of Education of Serbia and the Ministry of Scientific-Technological Development and Higher Education of Republika Srpska, both approved by the Government of Republika Srpska on August 15 and September 19, 2024.
- The *Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Sports of Republika Srpska and the Ministry for Family Care and Demographics of Serbia*, signed in June 2024.
- The *Memorandum on Cooperation between the Ministries of Internal Affairs of Serbia and Republika Srpska during the Tourist Season*, signed on June 18, 2024.

This is not the final list of legal acts and documents to be adopted or concluded for the implementation of the Declaration. Specifically, the conclusion of a memorandum in the field of geological research is anticipated in the near future. Furthermore, it should be noted that on September 15, 2021, the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, concurrently with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, adopted the *Law on the Protection, Preservation, and Use of the Serbian Language and Cyrillic Script* (“Official Gazette of Republika Srpska,” No. 81/22), which has never been subject to constitutional challenge.

Regarding the establishment of institutions and bodies, initiatives have been launched to form associations of faculties (such as the already existing Association of Medical Faculties), joint rectorial boards, and joint study programs; to establish and ensure the functioning of a joint Council for Aging and Intergenerational Cooperation; and to create the Public Institution *Memorial Center of Republika Srpska* (published in the “Official Gazette of Republika Srpska,” No. 60/24). Furthermore, the Parliamentary Forum Serbia – Republika Srpska has been established and has already convened twice, while the revitalization of the Energy Committee and its seven subcommittees has been announced.

Taking into account the previously stated facts, analyses, and perspectives presented during the scientific conference, the participants, by majority consensus, reached agreement and adopted the following:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Declaration of the “All-Serbian Assembly” is not limited to cooperation between the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity of Republika Srpska and the Republic of Serbia in the fields of culture and tradition, as it has been portrayed in public and misinterpreted by certain representatives of the international community. On the contrary, the Declaration exceeds the framework of the special parallel relations permitted by the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, threatening the sovereignty, territorial integrity, international subjectivity, and political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina - values protected by the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and guaranteed exclusively to the state, not its entities. Furthermore, the disregard for the constitutional competencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the harmonization of legal, educational, energy, construction, and other systems, i.e., the mutual alignment of legislation; the administrative practice of celebrating joint, monoethnic, holidays; and the continuous mono-ethnization and Orthodoxization of the Republika Srpska entity constitute violations of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and undermine peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
2. The concept of the “Serbian World” has evolved from an ideological narrative into an operationalized strategy aimed at rearticulating Serbian hegemony in the region through political, security, and cultural dimensions. The Declaration of the “All-Serbian Assembly” represents the formalization of this concept, seeking to establish a “soft” sphere of influence for Serbia within the territory of the former Yugoslavia, with the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity of Republika Srpska serving as the central element of this strategy. The strategy employs two parallel approaches: the institutional weakening of Bosnia and Herzegovina through internal disintegration processes and the gradual integration of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity of Republika Srpska, contrary to national and international law, into Serbia’s political, legal, economic, educational, and cultural framework. This dual-layered model reflects a long-term ambition to establish a *de facto* political union, which, under favorable international circumstances, could be transformed into a *de jure* union.
3. The actions undertaken by the entity of Republika Srpska, which include displaying the flag and coat of arms of the Republic of Serbia and playing its national anthem; the celebration of January 9 and the affirmation of shared “national” holidays; privileging the Serbian language and Cyrillic script; portraying the entity as an exclusively ethnic state of the Serbian people within Bosnia and Herzegovina; referring to the institutions of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina as “joint institutions”; asserting the entity’s unilateral right to claim competencies belonging to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and defining the content of the History curriculum solely through the lens of a Serbian nationalist historical framework, represent a repetition of behaviours previously deemed unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The persistence of Republika Srpska in unconstitutional actions and its defiance of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its institutions can only be understood as a continuous display of disloyalty to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This requires a decisive and forceful response from state institutions, the institutions of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and particularly from the Prosecutor’s Office and the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which must take a firmer, more resolute, and uncompromising approach to confront, prosecute, and sanction such conduct.

4. Since the adoption of the Declaration, numerous memorandums and agreements have been concluded between the institutions (governments and ministries) of the Republic of Serbia and the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity of Republika Srpska across various societal sectors, including higher education, scientific and technological development, mining, energy, public health, demographics, and internal affairs. Given that the content of these acts is, in whole or in part, inconsistent with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is imperative that constitutional defenders fulfil their constitutional duty and initiate proceedings to assess their constitutionality. The review of constitutionality should also extend to previously concluded agreements, memorandums and acts between the entity of Republika Srpska and the state of Serbia following the signing of the Agreement on Special Parallel Relations in 2006. Furthermore, in line with established judicial practice, it is necessary to initiate proceedings to assess the constitutionality of the “All-Serbian Assembly” Declaration and the Conclusions adopted by the National Assembly of Republika Srpska in connection with the Declaration’s adoption. The Constitutional Court should be requested to annul these acts, thereby removing them from the legal order of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
5. The “Serbian World” strategy relies on the anticipation of “favourable” geopolitical changes to create opportunities for realizing long-term territorial ambitions toward Bosnia and Herzegovina. This reflects a sophisticated and long-term geopolitical calculation, which also accounts for the additional malign influence of Russia in the Western Balkans, as well as reliance on alliances with far-right and ultranationalist parties in Europe.
6. Bosnian-Herzegovinian political actors must expose all the negative and harmful implications of the “All-Serbian Assembly” Declaration, which contravene national and international law, undermine the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and adversely affect overall interstate relations. Any discussions with representatives of Serbian political policies should be conducted at the state level, not on an ethnic, Serb-Bosniak basis.
7. The list of unresolved issues with the Republic of Serbia must be addressed with increased intensity and resolved through interstate dialogue — from the issue of the interstate border and disputed energy facilities to cooperation between state prosecutor’s offices.
8. The state authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina must develop a comprehensive diplomatic strategy to thoroughly inform the international community in detail about the destabilizing implications of the “Serbian World” strategy. This includes utilizing mechanisms within international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe, NATO, and the OSCE to strengthen support for Bosnia and Herzegovina.
9. The international community, utilizing established mechanisms, including the mandate of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Peace Implementation Council, is obligated to declare the “All-Serbian Assembly” Declaration as anti-Dayton, destructive, and null and void in order to preserve peace and security and fully implement the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, it must annul the decisions and conclusions of the National Assembly and Government of Republika Srpska related to the said Declaration.

10. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a secular state that operates on the principles of the rule of law and democracy. The unlawful interference of the Serbian Orthodox Church in state affairs, the establishment of church supremacy over secular authority, and the Church's aspirations to become a dominant political force dictating relations in the Balkans are unacceptable.
11. The Declaration, along with the accompanying narratives of political, academic, cultural, and religious representatives who advocate for it, deliberately articulates a revisionist approach that reinterprets legal, historical, and political realities. This includes denying and relativizing established and adjudicated facts, particularly the genocide in and around Srebrenica in July 1995. This is especially evident in institutional projects such as the establishment of the Public Institution "Memorial Center of Republika Srpska" and the work of the "Republika Srpska Center for Research of War, War Crimes, and Missing Persons", and the adaptation of educational curricula to align with revisionist interpretations.
12. The academic and research community in Bosnia and Herzegovina must dedicate itself to developing narratives that deconstruct the revisionist interpretations of the "Serbian World." This includes scientific research, publishing studies, and public campaigns that affirm legal, judicial, and historical facts.