



THE VICE PRESIDENT  
WASHINGTON

May 24, 2011

Dr. Michael Haltzel  
Center for Transatlantic Relations  
The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies  
The Johns Hopkins University  
1717 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 525  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mike:

Please convey my greetings to the participants in the conference, “The Western Balkans: Progress, Stagnation, or Regression?” which the Center for Transatlantic Relations and the America-Bosnia Foundation are holding in Sarajevo, June 12th-15th.

Speaking as someone with a longstanding commitment to democracy, prosperity and stability in the Balkans, your conference could not come at a more opportune time. Since my trip to the region two years ago, parts of the Western Balkans have moved forward, while others seem to be lagging. On the positive side, Croatia is poised to join its neighbor Slovenia in the European Union. Serbia and Kosovo are engaged in discussions on concrete issues, and Montenegro is progressing toward NATO membership. Citizens of Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Albania have received visa-free status from the EU.

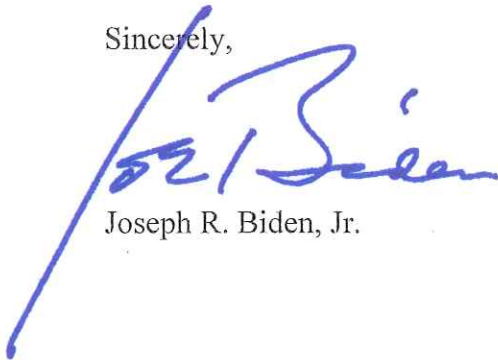
On the other hand, corruption continues to plague the entire region, and economic recovery has been slow and uneven. Macedonia and Greece remain deadlocked over the name-issue, and domestic political disputes in Bosnia and Herzegovina appear more serious than ever.

In my speech to the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina in May 2009, I said: “A prosperous, secure, democratic future inside the Trans-Atlantic community is not a guarantee or a gift. It must be built through hard work and compromise.” More specifically, I urged the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to “stop the pursuit of narrow ethnic and political interests instead of the national interest.” That admonition holds true today as it did two years ago.

You and I have seen the Western Balkans first-hand in peace and at war, in good times and in bad. I know that the people of the region desire a democratic, peaceful future in

the Euro-Atlantic community, and the United States is ready to support them. As I said in Sarajevo two years ago, "the Obama-Biden administration will sustain and re-energize the long standing American commitment to a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace." Your conference is symbolic of that American commitment as is the participation of Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon. We rely on experts outside of government to help decision-makers find solutions to the region's problems. I congratulate you on your initiative, and I wish the conference every success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Biden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "B".

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.