



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 10 November 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of a briefing provided by His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, Indonesia — on behalf of itself and Viet Nam — the Niger, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America in connection with the video-teleconference on the “The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina” convened on Thursday, 5 November 2020. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, as well as by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, this briefing and these statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Inga Rhonda **King**  
President of the Security Council



**Annex I****Statement by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Valentin Inzko**

It is my honour to address this organ once again. I am only sorry that again we must meet remotely due to the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic. I sincerely hope everyone here is doing well, including all citizens in their respective countries. With so many issues facing the Council, I am thankful that everyone here is still able and willing to take the time to focus on a discussion on Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is an ongoing concern. It is my wish that we meet again in person next spring.

By now, Council members will have read my report to the Council (S/2020/1052, annex), in which I have addressed the issues with which Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to grapple, and which I believe still require the continued attention and even stronger support of this organ and the international community.

This month, we will celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which has provided 25 years of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Looking back, Dayton has been a huge success, as it indeed brought peace to the country, and is even more impressive against the backdrop of various international disputes that have remained unresolved for decades, like in the Middle East, the Caucasus and elsewhere.

However, as it turns out, the Dayton Agreement, while also a solid framework for future development of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has brought an imperfect peace. After 100,000 people were killed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the priority of the Dayton fathers was — and rightly so — to stop the bloodshed and produce an agreement enabling future State-building reforms.

It is an undeniable fact that significant progress has been achieved in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first decade after Dayton, with the help of some politicians, like Mr. Dodik. State symbols were adopted and a new common currency, passport, flag, anthem, licence plates and even a national football league were created in order to enable freedom of movement. In addition, the taxation system improved, judicial reforms were implemented and joint armed forces were established in a country where earlier, three armies fought against each other. These are a few among many other changes.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to and thank my predecessors for their dedicated work in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Carl Bildt, Carlos Westendorp y Cabeza, Wolfgang Petritsch, the late Lord Ashdown, Miroslav Lajčák and Christian Schwarz-Schilling, who will soon turn 90.

Regrettably, the international community made one grave conceptual mistake during the implementation of the Dayton Agreement — we invested our trust in some politicians too early and they used our goodwill to reinvigorate nationalistic, divisive policies, especially from 2006 to date.

The lack of progress and real reforms is obvious. The blockage of state-level and, lately, Federation-level institutions has become a new normal in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also normal is the systemic discrimination against so-called others — citizens who do not declare themselves to be members of any of the constituent peoples as. I mention that because some politicians are very ill-prepared to remedy this shameful discrimination that affects about 10 per cent of the citizens.

It is also very worrisome that, 25 years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, some Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians still ignore core European values. The International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, established 75 years ago,

returned the sense of right and wrong to Europe and had a healing effect on some countries, including my home country, Austria. The Nuremberg trials prosecuted individual perpetrators of terrible crimes in the Second World War, including those committed during the Holocaust as the most heinous, and condemned Nazi war criminals forever to the wrong side of history.

The same has been attempted through the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), established by this very organ in 1993. Some Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians have failed, however, to understand the historic lesson of Nuremberg, and have completely missed the point of the ICTY and its work.

There is no collective guilt for war crimes; there are no bad nations, there is only individual responsibility. But the biggest lesson is that those who choose to ignore or rewrite history instead of accepting the truth, will not have a stable and prosperous future. As the German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in a landmark speech only a few days ago, on 28 October, “there is no place in the European Union for those who glorify war criminals”.

The latest example of glorifying a war criminal is Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency Chair Milorad Dodik’s request, on 16 September, that the Presidency honour and pay respect to the convicted war criminal Momčilo Krajišnik, who had died the previous day, with a minute of silence. Some time ago, Mr. Dodik opened a student dormitory in Pale, close to Sarajevo, in honour of convicted war criminal Radovan Karadžić, who has been sentenced to life by the ICTY. Similarly, upon his release, Dario Kordić, who served 12 years for war crimes, received a warm welcome organized by a political party and a church honoured him with a Catholic mass of gratitude.

I have previously reported to the Security Council on the glorification of war criminals, but on 11 July I repeated my appeal with regard to Srebrenica, where more than 8,000 boys and men were killed and buried. I urged Mr. Dodik to remove the commemorative plaque and rename the student dormitory dedicated to Radovan Karadžić. This is a dormitory where future generations will live and grow up. I repeat that appeal today. If he will not act before the next Security Council meeting in May, he should face a travel ban to all European Union (EU) countries and, eventually, to all States Members of the United Nations. As the German Foreign Minister said, there is no place in civilized Europe for those who glorify convicted war criminals. There is no place for those who do not share European values. That is, why we need a genocide denial law similar to the Holocaust denial law. The importance of shared values was again confirmed recently during the Zagreb summit of the EU.

Twenty-five years after Dayton, the reconciliation process should be a non-issue, but the reality is that when it comes to some politicians, it has not even properly started. In many respects, those who should lead that process are farther apart now than at any point after the war. The result is a lack of joint vision for the country, as well as insufficient trust and dialogue to move the country forward.

In that regard, I would like to note the adoption, in September, by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers, of the Revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy, pursuant to which the most serious war crimes should be prioritized for prosecution and completion by 2023. The previous National War Crimes Processing Strategy, adopted in 2008, envisioned the processing of the most complex cases by 2015, but was never fully implemented. The success of the new strategy will ultimately depend on the level of coordination, cooperation and discipline of the judicial institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am hopeful of the outcome.

But, in all candour, we need action first and foremost. Words on paper must translate into legal processes and decisions as soon as possible. I would like to be

able to report today that all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina look to the future and focus on important issues so as to improve the lives of the citizens, but I cannot say that this is always the case. As the Council knows, the country will hold local elections 10 days from now and, in some cases, instead of hopeful, forward-looking campaigns, I am afraid that we are seeing the usual divisive rhetoric.

Most recently, Mr. Dodik, who is the Serb member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the leader of the main Serb party, the Union of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), said that Bosnia and Herzegovina is the “wrong country”. Well, of course it is the wrong country when one rejects everything, makes no effort to come together to fix it and constantly talks about leaving it. Earlier, Mr. Dodik threatened that Serbs and Croats would present their plan for how Bosnia and Herzegovina should function and that, if not accepted, they would dissociate themselves from the country.

To be clear, Mr. Dodik is talking about the secession of the Republika Srpska from Bosnia and Herzegovina — again. Needless to say, there is already a plan for how Bosnia and Herzegovina should function; it is called the General Framework Agreement for Peace. There is no option in the agreement for secession, nor is it possible to cherry-pick provisions from the Dayton Agreement. Such statements are irresponsible, unfounded and show poor leadership. They also completely disregard the well-being and prosperity of the citizens, as well as the peace and stability of the region.

Given such rhetoric, I must acknowledge and express my thanks to the Council for its reauthorization of the mandate of the EU-led Operation Althea (EUFOR Althea) military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in fulfilment of its main peace-stabilization role under the military aspects of the General Framework Agreement for Peace. The continued presence of EUFOR Althea remains necessary.

As I have noted, Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the midst of campaigns for the 15 November local elections, and I want to express my gratitude and support to the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has endeavoured to organize these elections under extraordinary circumstances, while facing constant pressure and criticism, particularly by the Republika Srpska party led by Mr. Dodik, SNSD, and the Federation-based Croat Democratic Union (HDZ Bosnia and Herzegovina), led by Dragan Čović.

The members of the Central Election Commission have shown great resolve in addressing hateful rhetoric and seriously tackling numerous allegations of electoral fraud, particularly with regard to the seemingly fraudulent registrations of out-of-country voters. I urge the law enforcement agencies and judicial institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina to support the Central Election Commission in investigating and prosecuting all such cases.

The Central Election Commission is also preparing for the 20 December local elections in the city of Mostar — the first such elections in the city since 2008. That is owing to the 17 June agreement enabling the elections signed between HDZ Bosnia and Herzegovina President Dragan Čović and the Bosniak-majority Party for Democratic Action President Bakir Izetbegović. That agreement would not have been possible without the engagement of the international community, particularly European Union Special Representative Johann Sattler and United States Ambassador Eric Nelson.

However, as I have outlined in my report, Mr. Čović and Mr. Izetbegović have since been at odds over a second agreement, signed on 17 June in Mostar, aimed at reforming the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to their entirely different interpretations of what they actually agreed. Most recently, they reached

a stalemate centred around the appointment of the new Federation Government, which has yet to be appointed more than two years after the 2018 general elections, and the appointments of judges to the Federation Constitutional Court, which have been pending for more than a year, whose absence renders the Court's vital national interest panel non-functional. I have to note that on both issues, the HDZ Bosnia and Herzegovina side is primarily responsible for the blockages.

Despite their disagreements, after 12 years without elections, the city of Mostar must hold elections as scheduled, on 20 December.

I would further add that the long-overdue appointment of the new Federation Government must be carried out as soon as possible. Holding elections are meaningless if the results are not implemented. The same must be said for the appointments of local Governments in the Federation cantons of Herzegovina-Neretva and Canton 10. Additional Federation deficiencies are exhaustively addressed in my report to the Security Council.

Among other issues outlined in my report, I would like to underline the need for Bosnia and Herzegovina to dramatically strengthen the rule of law and bolster the fight against corruption. The rule of law remains a cornerstone of any functional democracy.

I would remind everyone that Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to undergo a massive brain drain as talented young people decide to leave the country and build their futures elsewhere. Numerous polls show that people are not leaving primarily due to a lack of economic opportunity, but rather due to weak rule of law. Binding court decisions go unimplemented for years and blatant corruption goes unpunished. Some public opinion polls suggest that 74 per cent of the citizens are unsatisfied with the situation in the judiciary. Those figures attest to what we are saying on a daily basis — that profound, radical and rapid judicial reforms are needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In that regard, I would like to reiterate that the case of the young, murdered student from Banja Luka, David Dragičević, the case of Dženan Memić and the case of the two policemen killed in Sarajevo have not been solved. What those cases have in common is that even after more than two years, investigations have stalled. What should citizens think if even the murder of policemen cannot be solved?

It may be of interest to the Council that Austria's Minister of Justice, Alma Zadić, is a highly talented and hard-working refugee child from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who studied at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Piacenza, Columbia University and the University of Vienna.

I would also underline that, despite repeated calls from members of the Council for the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement the 5+2 agenda — the five objectives and two conditions to be fulfilled prior to the closure of the Office of the High Representative and the end of my mandate — regrettably, there has been little progress other than the adoption of the Revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy.

I actually see very limited commitment to the implementation the 5+2 conditionality, particularly by those politicians who advocate the closure of the Office of the High Representative. They should find an agreement to implement the State and defence property registration, which are clearly defined. They must also move towards, not away from the implementation of the second condition: the "positive assessment of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on full compliance with the Dayton Peace Agreement".

Even today, I can state that I will not base my assessment of the fulfilment of the second condition on the use of the negative, anti-State rhetoric. Instead, I will assess the commitment of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to full and real compliance with the Dayton Agreement and will consider, in that regard, the concrete actions taken by some politicians to undermine the State and the Federation.

It is in our common interest to leave behind lasting and irreversible stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which can be achieved only through enduring and genuine commitment to the Dayton Peace Agreement, including the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution.

Until that is secured, the international community must uphold all applicable instruments in order to address potential threats to long-term stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including through the use of executive mandates, international judges in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court and international mechanisms in Brčko.

On 31 October, we reached the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), which the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina marked in November. I urge the authorities to implement the third national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), for the years 2018 to 2022, primarily in order to increase the effectiveness of women's roles in trust-building and political leadership. While women are at the core of ensuring socioeconomic stability in the country, they are nevertheless marginalized in political decision-making.

We need to explore every avenue that could assist the transformation of Bosnia and Herzegovina into a stable, peaceful and prosperous State that functions and provides for the needs and best interests of all of its peoples — one that is fully integrated with the European Union and other Euro-Atlantic structures. I firmly believe that this is what the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina want too. To achieve that goal, the international community will have to become more ambitious, and the country's leaders more serious.

In the past, the international community has employed robust interventionism and hands-off, local-ownership approaches. Given the reality on the ground, perhaps it is time to rethink our current approach. Let us finish the job in front of us, let us unite forces and let us turn a new page in our engagement and open a new chapter. It is not about us being satisfied, but rather it is about the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who deserve better and who still have trust in us.

For 500 years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a country with four basic religions — Islam, Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and Judaism. It was a pre-emptive small Europe of four religions and 16 minorities, living together for hundreds of years. Living among ordinary people, there are numerous Nelson Mandelas in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Only recently, in Jajce, in Central Bosnia, an imam attended the first mass of a newly ordained Catholic priest. It was also in Jajce that youngsters protested against the division of their high school, which would lead to two schools under one roof — a Croat and a Bosniak one. Those young people were successful and received the prestigious Max van der Stoep Award for their courage and principled stand. It was awarded by Stephanus Blok, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, in presence of the First Vice President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans.

This is why I firmly believe that, together with international community as partners, this ancient Bosnia and Herzegovina, full of values, can be recreated and reinvigorated.

## Annex II

### Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Karen Van Vlierberge

[Original: French]

Belgium aligns itself with the declaration submitted on behalf of the European Union (annex XVIII).

I thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his briefing. We particularly appreciate his work on the ground in a complex environment.

We welcome the unanimity within the Council that led to the renewal of the European Union-led Operation Althea for another year. This mission contributes to the viability of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single, united, sovereign and multi-community country, and to the stabilization of the region. As a member of the European Union, Belgium will continue to give the country its full support.

Twenty-five years after the signing of the Dayton Accords, Bosnia and Herzegovina has emerged as an independent State on the road to Euro-Atlantic integration. However, only by carrying out all the necessary reforms will it be able to realize its aspiration of one day becoming a member of the European Union. Strengthening the rule of law and the fight against corruption must be at the heart of those efforts. We call on Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt the necessary reforms to strengthen the judiciary and ensure its independence, including in the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council.

In view of the local elections scheduled for 15 November, we call on all political actors to refrain from provocative rhetoric during the election period. After 12 years without elections, we welcome the agreement to hold local elections in Mostar on 20 December, thus enabling its inhabitants to finally exercise their right to vote.

We stress that any electoral reform must be inclusive and in line with European standards. In that respect, we also call for ensuring the equality and non-discrimination of citizens and the full implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, including *Sejdić and Finci* and related judgments. It is also essential to implement the recommendations of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Twenty-five years after the genocide in Srebrenica, the denial of genocide and war crimes and the glorification of war criminals continues. Let me be clear: there can be no room for the denial of genocide and war crimes. The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals and the International Court of Justice have ruled that the atrocities committed in Srebrenica 25 years ago constitute a crime of genocide. Continued denial only undermines reconciliation efforts and needlessly increases the pain of the survivors. That is unacceptable and must stop, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere.

We welcome the adoption of the Revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy. It is important that it be effectively and promptly implemented. We also encourage the adoption of an international law criminalizing the denial of genocide and war crimes.

Genuine reconciliation is possible only if concrete measures are taken to fight impunity by ensuring the effective prosecution of war criminals and shedding light on the fate of victims.

Victims and survivors must be at the centre of those efforts. Their rights and their meaningful participation in reconciliation efforts must be guaranteed. Survivors deserve truth, justice and reparations for crimes committed against their family members. While the path to reconciliation is long, it is the only way to achieve lasting peace.



**Annex III****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: Chinese]

I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Over the past 25 years, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has remained generally peaceful and stable. We hope that all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina will take the twenty-fifth anniversary as an opportunity to reiterate their commitment to implement the Dayton Peace Agreement, increase mutual trust, build consensus, maintain unity, strengthen cooperation and continue to advance the process of national peace and reconciliation.

China respects the choice of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina with regard to the future of their country, and supports the harmonious coexistence and common development of all ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country will hold local elections on 15 November and, in December, Mostar will hold its first elections since 2008. Those elections are of great significance for the consolidation of the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We hope that all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina will meet each other halfway, persist in resolving pending issues through dialogue and consultation and jointly advance election preparations.

In the light of the severe challenges posed by the coronavirus disease epidemic, all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina should put national interests first, strengthen unity and cooperation, promote the development of national mechanisms and systems, improve decision-making efficiency and capacity, increase investment in medical and health infrastructure and promote economic and social recovery and development in order to create an environment conducive to the harmonious coexistence of people of all ethnic groups.

Maintaining peace, stability and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the common interest of the international community and countries of the region. The international community should adopt a fair, balanced and prudent attitude on the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to help the country promote the process of peace and reconciliation in accordance with the Constitution and improve its ability to achieve development and ensure national security on its own. We hope that the senior representatives will carry out their work strictly in accordance with their mandates, maintain an objective and neutral stance, pursue constructive dialogue and cooperation with all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and promote the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. China hopes that the European Union's multinational stabilization force in Bosnia and Herzegovina will strengthen communication and coordination with all relevant parties and play a positive role in maintaining security and stability.

For a long time, the peace and reconciliation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina has consistently received the attention and support of the international community and has benefited from tremendous help from other countries. We hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina will strictly abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in its foreign relations, handle relevant issues in a balanced and prudent manner, respect the sovereignty of other countries and refrain from interfering in other countries' internal affairs.

China is willing to work with the international community to continue to contribute to the realization of lasting peace, stability and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Annex IV****Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

We thank Mr. Valentin Inzko for his report (S/2020/1052, annex).

We would like to start by congratulating the Central Election Commission, which, despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic, has been successful in preparing for the upcoming elections. In that regard, we welcome the fact that, on 20 December, local elections will be allowed to take place in Mostar for the first time in 12 years.

However, we are concerned that the results of the 2018 general elections have not yet been fully implemented and that, due to a lack of political consensus, the appointment of a new Government for the Federation and two other cantons is still pending, while the appointment of the judges who will complete the Federation Constitutional Court team continues to be blocked. We consider it necessary to resume talks to finalize the outstanding issues and to make progress on the agenda of five objectives and two conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

As a gesture of political goodwill, the pending decisions to be implemented, which were issued some time ago by the European Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the recommendations of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Group of States against Corruption, should be considered as a matter of urgency.

We welcome the information that Bosnia and Herzegovina may benefit from the 2020 enlargement and investment package in the Western Balkans of the European Union (EU). In that regard, we echo the High Representative's call for political leaders to promote the enactment of reforms that will pave the way for progress towards EU accession.

The Dominican Republic takes this opportunity to join the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace and we call on the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in both its entities — the Republika Srpska and the Federation — and at all levels of society, to reflect on the challenges, achievements and goals to be met after two and a half decades of changing the bleak landscape of a conflict into the promising paths of peace and coexistence as a nation.

It is time to leave behind the divisive rhetoric. These 25 years of transition towards the consolidation of peace are being celebrated in an environment of a global health crisis that demands flexibility and unity in political leadership and requires the promotion of tolerance, institutionalism and respect for the Constitution.

In this, our last intervention on this important topic as members of the Council, we invite the political leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to seize this opportunity to build together a strategic alliance in support of its public institutions and in support of the consolidation of a strong rule of law. We propose that they become one force and focus on overcoming the obstacles that prevent them from achieving full stability and sustainable development. In order to do so, they must be governed by inclusion, unity in ethnic and religious diversity, accountability, access to justice, youth and women's empowerment, citizen security and the fight for poverty reduction.

We reiterate our recognition of the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina while welcoming the unanimous adoption of resolution 2549 (2020), extending the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force, Operation Althea.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call for support to the Office of the High Representative and to build a Bosnia and Herzegovina that is the product of consensus and democratic maturity with the sole objective of meeting the expectations for the well-being of a people who are celebrating 25 years of commitment to peace with hope.

**Annex V****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I would like to thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his twenty-fourth regular report to the Secretary-General (S/2020/1052, annex) since assuming his post in 2009. We commend his work, in particular, as the tasks that he tackles remain closer to 100 per cent, although his team's size and budget have considerably decreased in recent years. Estonia would like to state its full support for a robust and effective Office of the High Representative, which is necessary in order to fulfil its mandated responsibilities.

In addition, we align ourselves with the statement submitted by the European Union (EU) (annex XVIII). The European Union-led Operation Althea is a strong contributor to the country's work in maintaining a safe and secure environment, and we fully support its continued executive mandate.

It is of concern that the authorities of the Republika Srpska have continued divisive rhetoric and resorted to frequent actions targeting the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and even its Constitution. All political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina should refrain from any actions or policies that could destabilize the country. It is high time to put aside differences and focus on uniting to face the common challenges.

As we learned from the High Representative's last report (S/2020/1052, annex), the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has disrupted the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with serious and potentially long-lasting consequences. Estonia stands in strong support of the EU's solidarity with the Western Balkans and its mobilization of a substantial financial support package of €3.3 billion to help the region to overcome the COVID-19 crisis. We commend the work and support of all others who have provided assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina during the pandemic, such as the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Development Programme.

This July, we commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. The downplaying of that tragic historical event in any way is unacceptable. Spreading nationalist and provocative rhetoric, denying war crimes or glorifying convicted war criminals is not in line with the country's Euro-Atlantic perspective.

We welcome the adoption of the Revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers and encourage the authorities to implement it. A functioning Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court is of vital strategic importance for the country, and we fully support its members, particularly its international judges. We call on all political parties in the country to implement the important decisions of the aforementioned Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights. We strongly underline the need for the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to work towards strengthening the rule of law, fight against corruption and implement binding judicial decisions.

We hope that the municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 15 November will be free and fair. We welcome the progress made during the past few months, in particular the adoption of legislative amendments for the local elections in Mostar, which must lead to their organization on 20 December, for the first time since 2008. That is a major achievement.

Estonia is certain that Bosnia and Herzegovina's future is adjoined with the Euro-Atlantic path, in line with the legitimate aspiration of its citizens. We stress the importance of continuing with the implementation of the 14 key priorities of

the European Commission's opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union.

To move forward, all the country's political leaders should deliver concrete results and implement fundamental reforms. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we call on all levels of Government to work in solidarity and unity.

**Annex VI****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Christoph Heusgen**

First, I align myself with the statement by Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to the United Nations, (annex XVIII).

I thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his briefing and dedication to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Throughout his briefing, he showed the sympathy that he has for the country. It was wonderful that he ended on a positive note, citing the example of students that demonstrate and fight against the division. Unfortunately, in many schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina the children are divided according to their religious adherence and go to school in the morning or in the afternoon accordingly. Overcoming that is something very positive. It also sends a message of hope.

At the same time, I echo the regret that High Representative Valentin Inzko also expressed about the fact that many well-educated young people leave the country frustrated. They look for better opportunities. I am very happy that there is a good Minister of Justice from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Austria, but would it not be wonderful to have had that young person stay in, or return to, Bosnia and Herzegovina and be in the service of his home country? What are the reasons — frustration, corruption, a lack of economic perspectives and deficits in judicial reform? It is very sad to hear about the incapacity to investigate the murders that the High Representative cited.

Coming back to the positive side, it is very good that we have the local elections on 15 November, and those of us who have been in Mostar can assess the symbolic importance of elections in this central, historic city of Mostar. It is good that leaders agree on this, but we need to continue to build on that. In particular, we have to ensure that irregularities with regard to the voter registration are corrected.

Cooperation among politicians needs to go beyond those elections. They need to actually implement the reforms that were laid out in the EU Commission's opinion. The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has committed itself to that opinion. We must see that those commitments are implemented.

We welcome the work of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is a very important instrument. It was created in Dayton by international judges. Germany was very happy to contribute a highly respected judge to the Constitutional Court. On the other hand, we regret the verbal attacks on and defamation against the Court and the judges. We are of the opinion that the authority of the Court cannot be questioned.

Talking about defamation, I was really depressed by what the High Representative and other speakers said about incendiary speeches. There continues to be a divisive, negative rhetoric. The existing divisions are sometimes even deepened and make reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina increasingly difficult. The glorification of war criminals is something terrible. As High Representative Valentin Inzko said, to name a dormitory after a convicted war criminal and to organize a mass for a war criminal are simply abominable. I support what High Representative Valentin Inzko suggested about having Bosnia and Herzegovina adopt a genocide denial law. In that context, the clear indications of a value-based foreign policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina are a positive development, as we have witnessed in the Third Committee.

I echo what High Representative Valentin Inzko said on resolution 1325 (2000). It is very good that there is a national action plan in preparation. Again, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. It cannot be that women are marginalized in

political decision-making. We are not anywhere close to the 40 per cent. So, in that respect, more really has to be done. The question of whether it is better to have a robust or a hands-off approach is not to be resolved today. But I think the answer has also to be given in the light of the glorification of war criminals.

Let me end with one aspect that just came across my table this morning. On the situation of human rights defenders, Ms. Mary Lawlor, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, called on the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to investigate a smear campaign and death threats against women human rights defenders working for the rights of refugees and migrants. She said,

“Instead of criminalizing migration and human rights defenders who help migrants, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina must guarantee the human rights of all individuals without regard for their nationality or immigration status.”

She spoke out after an online hate campaign intensified against Ms. Zehida Bihorac, an elementary school teacher and woman human rights defender. She works in the north-west of the country in Una-Sana canton, which borders EU member State Croatia. Since 2018, she has been giving humanitarian help to refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. I would like to end by echoing the appeal of the United Nations Special Rapporteur with regard to the situation of human rights defenders.

**Annex VII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Dian Triansyah Djani**

I have the honour to deliver this joint statement on behalf of the two Association of South-East Asian Nations members of the Security Council, Viet Nam and Indonesia.

We would like to thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his twenty-fourth report (S/2020/1052, annex) and his insightful briefing.

Our two delegations commend the efforts made in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the past six months, including the preparations for the upcoming 2020 local elections, and the steps taken to respond to and recover from impacts of the coronavirus disease pandemic with support from the international community.

With the approach of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, sadly there are not enough positive developments on the ground. The objectives and conditions to build a resilient and united society for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, have not been fully implemented.

We note with concern the High Representative's report about the unproductive political climate in the country, the increase in economic dependence and the vulnerabilities of the population. In that regard, we would like to highlight three points.

First, we support the approach to strengthen local ownership of the political process, economic development and regional cooperation, which truly serves the long-term interests of the country and its people. We support the work of the High Representative in that regard, and we call for continued international support to Bosnia and Herzegovina, including in terms of capacity-building and human capital development.

Secondly, we call on all concerned parties to make more efforts to strengthen national unity for long-term stability and development. Both Viet Nam and Indonesia are multi-ethnic and multireligious countries. As such, we fully understand the value of national unity and harmony for the benefit of all our people.

National unity can benefit from trust-building measures, national reconciliation, dialogue and the rule of law, all of which are aimed at the ultimate interests of the country and all its people. In turn, such unity can help to achieve the effective formulation and functioning of the Government at all levels and to address all the current challenges.

Thirdly, we reiterate the importance of respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the implementation of the relevant treaties and Security Council resolutions.

I would like to close by expressing Viet Nam and Indonesia's long-standing support for the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to find a lasting solution that can accommodate the needs of all stakeholders. We have confidence that the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities and people, together with the international community, will find the best solution for a stable and prosperous country.



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**Annex VIII****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Niandou Aougi**

[Original: French]

At the outset, allow me to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the quality of his briefing.

The political climate in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a major source of concern, in part due to disagreements over the overall State budget and the appointment of the members of the Central Election Commission, which led to the postponement of the local elections, originally scheduled for October, to 15 November. In addition, the lack of funding has considerably undermined the smooth functioning of the institutions and their capacity to cope with the urgent needs arising from the coronavirus disease pandemic.

In that context, it is necessary that the relevant actors fulfil their obligations under national and international legal instruments relating to elections, including the 17 June agreement on the holding of elections in the city of Mostar.

The rule of law is crucial to democratic stability and progress. To that end, we urge the parties to work to strengthen the rule of law, including through adherence to the constitutional and legal requirements and respect for the independence of the judiciary. I would like to commend the efforts made by regional and international actors to ensure that the rule of law takes root in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina has made the return of refugees and displaced persons a crucial element of its implementation. According to the agreement, it is the responsibility of all parties to create the conditions for the voluntary return and reintegration of displaced persons and refugees.

Despite the tireless efforts of the international community, the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace remains ineffective.

To that end, it is important to refrain from rhetoric and behaviour that undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and challenge the powers of its main institutions.

The presence of the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina Operation Althea remains an important factor for security and stability, as demonstrated by its essential role in maintaining a safe and secure environment.

In conclusion, my delegation calls for the constructive political engagement and ownership of the General Framework Agreement for Peace by the parties.

**Annex IX****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: Russian]

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the Dayton Agreement. As one of the guarantors of the Dayton Agreement, Russia fully supports the basic principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the equality of the three constituent peoples and the two entities with broad powers. In the year of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton Agreement, we call on our partners in the Security Council to make an unambiguous statement in support of those provisions. The document, which is fundamental to Bosnia and Herzegovina, has remained relevant ever since it was signed in 1995. It envisages administrative arrangements and the balance of interests of the three peoples, which are perfectly effective when properly observed. The desire to destroy such a system could have dangerous consequences not only for the Balkans, but also for Europe as a whole.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is perfectly stable; it poses no threat to international or regional peace and security. However, inter-ethnic relations demonstrate a negative trend. The level of trust and the quality of the internal political dialogue have deteriorated significantly. This is primarily due to the fact that some Bosnian actors have aspired to reshape the Dayton architecture to make the State more centralized and unified. Some international stakeholders support that process. No external political statements can serve as the basis for undermining the balance of ethnic interests in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is enshrined in the peace agreement. The existing order can be changed only if the three peoples and the two entities reach an agreement without any external interference.

The peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina determine their domestic and foreign agenda by themselves. The local authorities are exclusively responsible for the situation in the country, in accordance with the concept of local ownership, which we assume the international community still shares. Therefore, any reform of election law and the judicial system should take into account the interests of all of peoples in the country.

We expect that the upcoming local elections, to be held on 15 November and 20 December, will take place peacefully in line with the existing rules. We call upon all the participants, including the Central Election Commission, to act responsibly and work in the interests of all peoples in the country.

The international community should carry out a sober assessment of the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of the real situation rather than the individual policies of Member States with respect to the legitimate aspirations of all peoples, and should refrain from exerting pressure on their legitimate representatives. With regard to international law, the use of unilateral actions as a political tool is unacceptable. We are counting on constructive international efforts in order to promote national reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We regret that High Representative Inzko's briefing yet again, for the twenty-fourth time in a row, painted a subjective picture of the situation in Bosnia Herzegovina that is far from reality. It is clear that the High Representative is trying to assign all the responsibility for the failure of the inter-ethnic reconciliation to the Bosnian Serbs and Croats. They are depicted as violators of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The High Representative is trying to scare the international community while ignoring the real situation in the country. We suggest that members of the

Security Council acquaint themselves with the alternative viewpoint presented in the report of the Government of the Republic of Srpska.

Once again, we ask the High Representative to endeavour in the future to make his reports more balanced and objective and to refrain from an overly broad interpretation of his mandate, in particular with regard to the Euro-Atlantic agenda.

We recall that the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina's cooperation with NATO is not within the remit of the Office of the High Representative, but is rather, in accordance with the division of powers, a prerogative of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the opinions of the entities and constituent peoples should be duly taken into account.

Mr. Inzko offered a tendentious and biased assessment of the situation in the country. We are again convinced that there is no added value in maintaining this mechanism of international protection in sovereign and independent Bosnia and Herzegovina. The time is right to consider the conditions and criteria for closing the Office. We propose exchanging opinions on this issue during the meeting of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board, which is scheduled for 1 and 2 December.

We believe that the complaints of the High Representative about the staff reduction and budget cuts in the Office of the High Representative are unfounded. The role of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina has changed dramatically and the concept of local ownership does not imply external interference in local affairs. Therefore, any kind of special tools for the Office of the High Representative are out of question. The staff and financing of the Office of the High Representative should continue to be downsized.

We intend to further promote the implementation of the peace agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which retains its potential, and to strengthen bilateral cooperation with all peoples in the country. Bosnian Herzegovina has every chance of becoming an area of successful political, economic and cultural interaction among a wide range of stake holders.

In view of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton Agreement, we are planning to convene an Arria Formula meeting at which the legitimate representatives of all three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be given the floor. We expect that this event will give us an opportunity to better understand the significance of the peace agreement and how important it is to fully implement it in the context of the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and assess the political and historic relevance of Dayton for both Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkan region as a whole.

## **Second statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

To be frank, I do not quite understand what part of my statement surprised my German colleague so much. Our position with regard to the Office of the High Representative is consistent, and it is not the first time that we have expressed it. Indeed, our statement today was mild as compared to previous statements. We fully believe that the Office of the High Representative has outlived its usefulness and is not contributing to the country's development. On the contrary, it hinders the country's development in many respects. That is why we have long raised the issue of the need to progressively move towards closure of the Office of the High Representative. I think that the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board will address this issue at its meeting on 1 and 2 December.

On the subject of bias and lack of balance, I would recommend that my German colleague not only to listen to statements by the High Representative, but also read the report that was drafted for today's briefing (S/2020/1052, annex). Then it will be clear what motivated us to speak of unbalanced assessments in the report of the High Representative.

I am glad that my German colleague has pointed out that it is unacceptable to glorify war criminals. I would be grateful if he were to be consistent with respect to some of his colleagues in the European Union (EU) and of some countries wishing to join the European Union that are home to blatant and flagrant glorification of collaborators and war criminals. For some reason, neither our EU colleagues, nor, in particular, my German colleague draw attention to that.

### **Third statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

I thank High Representative Inzko for his comments. I would like to make one point clear — our criticism of the Office of the High Representative is not criticism of the High Representative personally, but rather of the role which in our view the Office plays in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

No one denies the fact that the country is encountering problems. We spoke of this in our statement. The question is — what are the roots of those problems? Of course, we can delve into history and recall how it all started and how it ended. Of course, Dayton was a breakthrough that prevented the worst-case scenario. But now it is time for Bosnia and Herzegovina to stand on its own feet and move towards development. We only request the High Representative to make sure that his role in this process does not create challenges, increase tensions and raise questions among the representatives of the entities that are most often criticized — the Serbs and Croats.

As for the reports, the reports themselves are not the problem. There have been precedents in which certain entities that are not constituent States have shared some assessments with the Security Council. That is a normal practice, especially since Republika Srpska is a party to the Dayton Agreement and, as such, has a right to express its viewpoint on developments in the Federation. These assessments should be duly considered.

As Council members may note, it is no coincidence that we proposed the convening of an Arria Formula meeting on the occasion of the anniversary of the Dayton Agreement. The Security Council often discusses Bosnia and Herzegovina, but those meetings mostly provide general assessments of the actual developments in the country, many of which raise concerns for both sides. I think that it would be wise to provide an opportunity for the representatives of the three constituent peoples to present their assessments to members of the Security Council. That can be done in an Arria Formula meeting, the date of which we will announce later.

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**Annex X****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King**

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his briefing. We express our appreciation for the work that his Office continues to provide to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining a safe and secure environment.

The coronavirus disease pandemic continues to pose a challenge to the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the rest of the world. We acknowledge the efforts that were taken to help contain widespread outbreaks, however, we regret that the relevant political leaders were not able to establish a functional mechanism to address the health crisis. In this regard, we urge all political parties to cooperate and coordinate necessary measures to safeguard and support public health in ensuring an effective response to curb the pandemic.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines urges all leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to uphold the rule of law, including the fight against corruption and organized crime. We further underline our commitment to support the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as relevant decisions of the Peace Implementation Council.

We continue to encourage collaboration among the parties in accordance with international law and emphasize the need for diplomacy and the end of divisive rhetoric. In this respect, we urge all political actors to refrain from using ethnic slurs and stereotypes, and we call on the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance reconciliation and mutual understanding.

We commend the agreements signed between the leaders of the Bosniak-majority Party for Democratic Action and the Federation-based Croat Democratic Union regarding the election law. We urge all parties to cooperate with the Central Election Commission in discharging its legal responsibilities and to pursue the reforms required to ensure that all citizens can exercise their political rights. In particular, we encourage the increased participation of women in the political sphere.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our support for overall peace and stability in the region and for the extension for the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea.

**Annex XI****Statement by the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations**

We would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We would also like to express our appreciation for the informative and comprehensive briefing by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, on the most recent report of his Office (S/2020/1052, annex) on the political, security and humanitarian situation in the country.

South Africa welcomes the progress relating to the holding of elections in the city of Mostar in December after a long hiatus. In this context, it is necessary for the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to speedily appoint the Constitutional Court judges and other entities necessary for the effective functioning of the State and to also ensure that the agreement between the Croat Democratic Union and the Party for Democratic Action holds.

We wish to take this opportunity to stress that the continued disagreements between the political parties have negatively impacted the fulfilment of the five objectives and two conditions that must be fulfilled prior to the closure of the Office of the High Representative, established by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board, which is disconcerting.

In addition, the provocative, divisive and nationalistic rhetoric undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State. Therefore, we call on all parties to respect the rule of law and legal instruments that underpin the political structures of the country, as well as to swiftly undertake steps to harmonize the constitutions of some cantons with the national Constitution.

We further call for constructive dialogue among the different ethnic groups and entities, as well as among the various Bosnian structures and the High Representative. South Africa believes that it is only through constructive and inclusive political dialogue that outstanding issues can be resolved and trust established between the sides.

Therefore, South Africa encourages all the parties to recommit themselves to the full implementation of their obligations under the existing peace accords, agreements and Security Council resolutions. Political will and national ownership remain essential in moving the process of long-term peace, stability and reconciliation forward.

South Africa commends the High Representative for showing restraint in instances where he could have applied his executive powers. We believe that his conduct ensures local ownership of the processes in line with the Peace Implementation Commission for Bosnia and Herzegovina and shows his appreciation of the challenging task at hand.

Furthermore, we commend the Office of the High Representative for its support to the District Supervisor in Brčko, where key milestones are being recorded, including large-scale infrastructure projects. We also take this opportunity to commend all the stakeholders in their efforts to ensure the adoption of the Revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy as an important step towards healing Bosnia and Herzegovina. This signals the aspiration of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to live in enduring peace and stability.

In conclusion, it is important that the support of the international community to the people and Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina be sustained over the long term. This is critical to moving the country forward in achieving security and stability both internally and in the broader region.

**Annex XII****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations**

At the outset, I would like to thank High Representative Mr. Valentin Inzko for his comprehensive briefing on the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, and welcome the participation of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, and the delegation of the European Union.

My delegation welcomes the political agreement, signed in June, which will allow for local elections to be held in Mostar next December for the first time since 2008. We commend the international community's efforts to facilitate this landmark development.

Nevertheless, we regret that the political campaign is already characterized by divisive, negative rhetoric that deepens existing divisions and makes reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina increasingly difficult.

With the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace approaching, we sincerely hope that the political parties campaigning for the 2020 local elections will use the opportunity to reflect not on the past wartime, but on the ensuing 25 years of peace, and offer forward-looking perspectives to all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We believe that all parties should focus on what binds them together, rather than on misgivings and suspicions that separate them and raise tensions. We remain particularly concerned by the rhetoric of hatred, glorification of war crimes and denial of genocide.

We call on all parties to show the will necessary to do away with divisive appeals that exacerbate ethnonationalism, put the whole process of consolidating peace and stability under serious threat and undermine the very improvements and progress that citizens wish to see.

We would like to express our support to the efforts of the Office of the High Representative in line with the Dayton Peace Agreement and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and we call on all parties to make concerted efforts to implement the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With regard to the 5+2 agenda, we encourage all parties to fulfil their commitments with a view to ensuring Bosnia and Herzegovina's full autonomy.

A quarter century after the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, many issues are not yet resolved. In this regard, we call on all political leaders to prioritize the national interest of all the citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and pave the way for the younger generation to build a better future based on political and cultural unity.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate Tunisia's full support to all efforts aiming at stabilizing Bosnia and Herzegovina, achieving reconciliation among its various ethnic groups, and fostering lasting peace and security so that it can concentrate on reforms, including the reinforcement of justice, the rule of law, human rights and democracy, which are necessary to build a prosperous nation and better life for its citizens, who deserve to see their country moving ahead in the direction of real peace and not just lagging behind in a state of non-war.



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**Annex XIII****Statement by the Political Coordinator of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Sonia Farrey**

I thank the High Representative and his team for his latest comprehensive report (S/2020/1052, annex). This highlights that the international community still has a role to play in supporting a secure, peaceful and sustainable future for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Office of the High Representative continues to have an important role to play in galvanizing action by local authorities to create this future. It has the United Kingdom's full support, including the use of executive powers, should the situation require it.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, like nearly every other country, is now facing the challenges of responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). This will require continued focus and coordination by the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina at all levels as the number of cases rises. Despite these challenges, we are glad that preparation for the 2020 local elections has continued. Like High Representative Inzko, we commend the work of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Central Election Commission in the face of numerous political challenges, and support its endeavours to reduce the risk of election fraud.

The United Kingdom would like, in particular, to welcome the agreement reached by the leaders of the Party for Democratic Action and the Croat Democratic Union, which enables local elections to be held in Mostar on 20 December, for the first time since 2008. This breakthrough demonstrates the importance of cross-party and cross-community cooperation in propelling the country forward. We hope that all actors will support this important development and help the parties in Mostar to allow citizens to exercise their democratic rights.

I would also like to congratulate the Office of the High Representative for its work in Brčko district. Its strong coordinated effort with the international community has continued to promote good governance, infrastructure development and private-sector growth there. Collaborative work of this kind offers a potential model for reform elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ensuring citizens' ability to exercise their democratic right is vital. We urge the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to redouble their efforts to address outstanding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, most notably the Sejdić-Finci ruling, and to ensure that all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens can exercise their fundamental democratic rights and participate equally in their country's future. While we look forward to a time when they will not be necessary, international judges in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court continue to be a vital safeguard in Bosnia and Herzegovina's judiciary.

We continue to share the High Representative's frustration at the persistent threat of divisive nationalist rhetoric, even at a time when greatest solidarity is needed in the face of a global pandemic. With local elections imminent, we urge those responsible for these divisive statements to, instead, keep the citizens they were elected to represent at the forefront of their minds. Challenges such as migration, climate change and serious organized crime must be faced head on.

This year marks 25 years since the General Framework Agreement for Peace was signed, bringing an end to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is important that Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community find ways to mark the anniversary collectively and look ahead to the positive and prosperous future that Bosnia and Herzegovina deserves.

This follows the commemoration earlier this year of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the genocide at Srebrenica. I would like once again to remember the many thousands of victims and the continued suffering of the families, too many of whom are still missing their loved ones. We acknowledge the suffering on all sides of the Balkans conflicts, and it is only through meaningful reconciliation across communities that we can fully overcome the painful legacies of the past. We once again call for an end to the glorification of convicted war criminals and the denial of the Srebrenica genocide. This definition has been officially recognized by two international tribunals as well as domestic judicial bodies, and denial merely serves to reinforce the deep societal divisions that threaten to block Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress.

The United Kingdom continues to support reconciliation efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans more widely, including through our project programming and our role in the Berlin process and Peace Implementation Council. We encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina to fully respect the rule of law, democracy, media freedom and human rights. We support Bosnia and Herzegovina's continued commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration, and look forward to the submission of the next NATO programme of reforms.

**Annex XIV****Statement by the Political Coordinator of the United States of America to the United Nations, Rodney Hunter**

I thank High Representative Inzko for his continued dedication and representation of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United States of America commends Bosnia and Herzegovina for reaching an important milestone — 25 years of peace following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. That historic agreement provided an opportunity to end the ravages of war so that future generations could live in peace and security. But, as we all know, challenges still remain.

To fully realize Dayton's promise, Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders must abandon the zero-sum ethnic politics of the past. By improving governance, combatting corruption and increasing accountability, today's leaders have an opportunity to fulfil their people's aspirations for a future that is integrated with Euro-Atlantic institutions.

We also mark a tragic milestone this year. We remember those who lost their lives 25 years ago in the Srebrenica genocide. In July 1995, more than 8,000 men and boys were executed in Srebrenica. We stand with loved ones and friends who continue to seek justice and support efforts to honour the dignity of all the victims, including those who still await a final resting place. This painful event must never be denied or forgotten, and we must all ensure that a tragedy like Srebrenica is never repeated.

Looking forward, the local elections planned for 15 November and in Mostar on 20 December will be opportunities for Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders to demonstrate their commitment to free and fair elections. The Mostar elections — the first in that city since 2008 — will be an opportunity for the people to hold their leaders accountable and exercise their rights as citizens. We urge Council members to oppose any efforts by external actors to sow discord during the local elections, on the Dayton anniversary, and beyond.

We also encourage all levels of Government in Bosnia and Herzegovina to better coordinate in addressing the needs of refugees and migrants. We urge authorities to take all appropriate measures to address their needs, especially with respect to the provision of shelter. This is increasingly urgent, as we all know, as winter approaches.

Furthermore, the United States supports the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR Althea, a military deployment responsible for overseeing the military implementation of the Dayton accords. We commend the work of EUFOR Althea and its role in preserving a safe and secure environment.

In this regard, we also thank the United Kingdom for its enduring contributions to security in the Western Balkans, including 16 years of deployed service as part of EUFOR Althea. The first EUFOR Commander was British Major General David Leakey in 2004, and he set a high bar in excellence leading the force that carries through to today. We appreciate the United Kingdom's continued role in the region through NATO.

The Trump Administration is committed to assisting the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their pursuit for peace, and the pursuit for a more free, just and democratic society. We also believe that Bosnia and Herzegovina must continue to stay the course towards European integration and transatlantic cooperation. Towards this end, we look forward to fully meeting previously agreed objectives and

conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. In meeting these objectives, the security, stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be greatly enhanced.

As we mark the milestone of 25 years since Dayton, we call on all friends of Bosnia and Herzegovina to lend their support as the country looks ahead to the next 25 years and beyond. The United States envisions a modern, multi-ethnic, stable and prosperous democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one that is responsible for its own destiny. For Bosnia and Herzegovina to succeed, the next generation must be able to obtain the opportunities they seek within a diverse, united and integrated republic in the heart of Europe.

**Annex XV****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations, Sven Alkalaj**

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November, and to wish you and your delegation every success. We also welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have taken note of his report on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, covering the period from 16 April through 15 October 2020 (S/2020/1052, annex).

We welcome the Security Council's unanimous adoption of the resolution extending the mandate of the European Union-led military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR Althea, which has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for many years. It is important to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina as a host country has enjoyed respectable and fruitful cooperation with EUFOR Althea, particularly in the areas of capacity-building and the training of its armed forces.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been peaceful and calm for a long period of time, which has been regularly reflected in the reports of EUFOR Althea as well as in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The EUFOR Althea mission is mandated to support the implementation of military aspects of Peace Agreement and to ensure compliance with annexes 1-A and 2 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace. Over recent years, in order to correspond to the situation on the ground, EUFOR Althea has been reconfigured, while the primary focus of the mission has shifted from deterrence and activities for providing a safe and secure environment, to capacity-building and training.

Let me address the most urgent issues concerning the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities have responded very swiftly to the outbreak and various urgent and necessary measures have been put in place to contain spread of virus. All resources at our disposal have been mobilized. Our hospitals, medical and other relevant institutions have done a tremendous job to fight an unseen enemy. During the COVID-19 outbreak, health services have been provided to all persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including migrants and asylum seekers, irrespective of citizenship or health insurance status. Doctors, nurses, first responders and many others have been risking their lives in fighting this ferocious and highly contagious disease. We take this opportunity to thank all of them for their indispensable efforts and dedication. We would also like to thank our international partners for the valuable assistance and support they have rendered in these difficult times for humankind.

In addition to its impact on our health system, this pandemic hits our vulnerable economy very hard. According to an estimate by the International Monetary Fund, the gross domestic product of Bosnia and Herzegovina will decrease by 5 per cent in 2020. Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities have introduced some necessary measures to mitigate those negative effects. Some urgent financial packages have been created in order to help those suffering most. These efforts will take time and significant resources to recover from the unforeseen situation caused by the virus, which has claimed so many human lives worldwide.

We would like to thank the European Union for rendering the immediate support to our health-care sector in tackling the coronavirus, as well as the assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina to address long-term social and economic recovery needs.

Also, the assistance of the international financial institutions would be welcome, especially from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to

overcome the negative economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that regard, the role of the United Nations will be indispensable through the United Nations country team and, of course, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and others.

Let me now turn to some points relating to other aspects of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina are scheduled to take place on 15 November. Also, overcoming the 12-year stalemate, the Central Election Commission has adopted a decision whereby local elections in the town of Mostar will be held on 20 December. The authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have finalized all necessary measures in order to enable that the elections be held smoothly, and in a democratic and credible manner. Citizens throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina will be able to exercise their rights and cast their votes to elect members of municipal councils, members of city assemblies and mayors.

The Council of Ministers has continued the cooperation with the entity Governments on issues concerning the European integration and reform processes, targeting the stabilization of the economy, increased effectiveness of public administration, and attraction of domestic and foreign investments enabling job creation.

The authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina are fully committed to overcoming the challenges facing them and to implementing the reforms required for the country's full-fledged integration into the European Union. In that regard, we are grateful to the EU for its active support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's European path and would like to urge both the EU and its member States to continue to intensify that support. For our part, we have made increased efforts in a number of areas relevant to achieving that goal, including the implementation of the reform agenda and socioeconomic reforms as a matter of priority, as well as our continuing determination to strengthen the rule of law and good governance in order to fulfil the requirements of the European Union to obtain candidacy status in 2021.

Most important, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have taken resolute steps towards candidacy status and prospective negotiations with the European Union with regard to the plan for implementation of the recommendations contained in the opinion of the European Commission. The Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted the rules of procedure of the Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union as an important step forward in European integration.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has continued to participate actively in regional cooperation and to maintain good-neighbourly relations. The fostering of friendly and constructive cooperation among the countries of the region on issues of mutual interest remains a top priority of Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy. The cooperation of the Western Balkan States within the framework of the Berlin process remains a key driver of their integration into the European Union and of stability in the region.

Bosnia and Herzegovina plays an active role in regional initiatives through the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Western Balkans Fund and the Central European Initiative, inter alia. Let me mention as a good example of regional cooperation the Sarajevo-Belgrade highway construction project, in the framework of cooperation among three partner countries, namely, Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to fulfil its international obligations with regard to countering terrorism and violent extremism. Bosnia and Herzegovina, with extensive support from the EU, has taken significant steps forward in strengthening the rule of law and the fight against organized crime. EU experts have been working together with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the implementation of the 2018-2022 action plan for the prevention of money-laundering and financing of terrorist activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The judicial institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to process individuals involved in fighting on behalf of terrorist organizations, as well as those who facilitate the recruitment of terrorist fighters. With regard to processing war crimes in domestic courts, we would like to reiterate that fighting impunity is vital for Bosnia and Herzegovina as a complex, multinational State.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is continuing with a very important planning, monitoring and evaluation process in the field of social and economic development that is fully in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, let me express our gratitude to the United Nations country team in Bosnia and Herzegovina for its outstanding contribution to, and tireless efforts in, assisting our institutions on the development agenda.

I would like to draw your attention, Madam President, to one of the main concerns of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities, namely, the issue of illegal migrants. The international migrant crisis continues to pose a substantial challenge to the States of the region and their economies. During the reporting period Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced a significant increase in refugees and migrants on its territory, most of whom crossed the border illegally.

It is important to emphasize that the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have enough capacity to implement and undertake all the measures necessary to curb the migrant crisis. Bearing in mind the lack of capacity and the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a final destination for migrants, our Government is in need of stronger international support.

We are grateful to the European Commission's financial support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities in handling migration and strengthening its capacity for border management. However, for a comprehensive response, the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina need much more support from the European Union as well as from United Nations agencies.

Bosnia and Herzegovina continues in these challenging times to contribute actively to international peace and security by deploying its military and police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Currently, we have approximately 45 personnel serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide.

I would like to reiterate that Bosnia and Herzegovina has fully endorsed the call of the Secretary-General, António Guterres, for a global ceasefire in all conflicts worldwide in order to silence the guns, stop the violence and raise voices for peace. There is nothing more important than an immediate ceasefire in all corners of the globe to reinforce diplomatic action, help create conditions for the delivery of life-saving aid and bring hope to places that are among the most vulnerable to the coronavirus disease pandemic. Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to cooperate with the States Members of the United Nations and the United Nations broader family on this critical and most pressing issue that the world is facing today.

Finally, we would like to express the readiness of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to continue their work in securing a better and prosperous future for its citizens, as well as our gratitude to our international partners for supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina on that path.

## Annex XVI

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the United Nations

The Republic of Croatia is fully aligned with the statement submitted by the representative of the European Union (EU) (annex XVIII). I would like to take this opportunity to address several points in my national capacity.

It is my pleasure to welcome High Representative Valentin Inzko and thank him for comprehensive report (S/2020/1052, annex) and briefing today.

A stable, functional, prosperous and secure Bosnia and Herzegovina has a key role to play in the stability not only of South-Eastern Europe, but of Europe in a wider sense. Croatia has been and will remain a strong supporter of Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts in making decisive strides towards its EU integration. Integration within the EU offers not only the best reform framework for the country, but also a comprehensive transformation of the whole of its society. We will spare no effort in supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in continuing to be anchored in European values and standards, with constitutional equality among its three constituent peoples and with the rights of all its citizens guaranteed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to invest significant efforts and undertake political, institutional and economic reforms in order to progress on its desired path. Over the last year, and, more importantly, in this year's enlargement package, the European Commission expressed its views with regard to these reforms.

We firmly believe that reform processes must come from within and can be accomplished only through an inclusive, internal, consensus-based process that will take place in an environment of dialogue and compromise. Today's Bosnia and Herzegovina is based on the Dayton-Paris Peace Agreement, as well as the country's Constitution, which is an integral part of that Agreement, which is 25 years old this year.

Through its entire history and under its current constitutional framework, a fundamental feature of Bosnia and Herzegovina remains its multinational setup as a State composed of three constituent peoples equal in their rights and in the rights of others. In that respect, it is important to stress that, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Serbs can rely on their own entity and Bosniaks on their numbers as the largest of the constituent peoples, Croats can rely only on constitutional guarantees and the legal and institutional system for their equality to be ensured.

The existing electoral system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a constituent people smaller in numbers — the Croats — is being given greater weight than a larger constituent people — the Bosniaks — is not in line with its Constitution. This fact is contributing to political tensions and slowing down reforms. It is therefore of key importance to embark on election-law reform with urgency. This is becoming an even more pressing issue with the next general elections approaching in 2022.

In that regard, we deem it necessary to underline the importance of the political agreement on amendments to the electoral law signed by the two political leaders, Mr. Izetbegović and Mr. Čović, in June of this year. It is worth noting that in the agreement, political leaders expressed their full commitment to EU principles and values and to the implementation of all judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, all decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and all relevant recommendations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and of the Venice Commission. The agreement clearly shows signs of a political will to reach a compromise. It also enables Bosnia and Herzegovina to take ownership of this crucial process and to show that it is capable of tailoring its own destiny.



The taking of ownership in this manner has been requested by the international community many times, and now that it has occurred it should be welcomed and acknowledged. We should all now follow up on that and encourage further efforts aimed at reaching a consensus on this important issue and call for an inclusive reform process and its implementation, which would eliminate all forms of inequality and discrimination in the electoral process, well in advance the 2022 general elections.

We also deem it necessary to draw attention to the problem of migration, and not just the burning problem of illegal migration, particularly in Una-Sana canton, the severity of which is also stressed in the report of the High Representative, and which throughout the past two years has been burdening the country and needs our urgent attention. Combating smuggling networks, improving return and readmission procedures, enhancing border control and migration management system are of key importance, not only as a security, but also as a humanitarian issue. We therefore need to focus our efforts towards enhancing border protection capacities of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through education and direct technical assistance as well as expert participation on the ground, strengthening the security and stability of the country and the whole region. This is particularly important in the present context, owing to the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic on vulnerable groups, refugees and migrants.

The recently adopted Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans demonstrates once again the EU's strong commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina and all Western Balkans partners. It is the most concrete example how the European Union is supporting the region.

In order to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's European path, Croatia has been implementing technical assistance projects that transfer the experience we gained from our EU pre-accession process through the framework of the European Partnership Agreement. Croatia is also a leading trade partner with the country. We are deeply engaged in the exchange of goods and in providing investment capital. Many regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina are included in the plans and strategies that underlie our interregional and cross-border cooperation programmes and instruments.

Let me conclude by stressing once more that Bosnia and Herzegovina is Croatia's friend and important neighbour. We are going to continue to work diligently to further develop close relations of partnership and cooperation, for the benefit of our peoples and for the wider region.

**Annex XVII****Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Serbia to the United Nations, Marina Ivanovic**

Regrettably, this meeting of the Security Council on Bosnia and Herzegovina is taking place as the world continues to struggle with the coronavirus disease pandemic. The pandemic has amplified the many serious challenges that need to be addressed, which calls for cooperation among countries in every region worldwide. These difficult times remind us that only through solidarity and mutual support can we overcome the difficulties facing us; here, we believe, good-neighbourly cooperation is but the first step in the right direction.

I wish to point out that the crisis has brought to the fore a high level of solidarity and support between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and their citizens, as reflected, *inter alia*, in the opening of the “green corridor” at the border crossing at Sremska Raca, in line with the Central European Free Trade Agreement decision to establish a system meant to facilitate trade in goods among the countries of the region, particularly in products of humanitarian importance.

Serbia has taken every step to provide the necessary assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, including in particular medical and personal protection equipment. Bosnia and Herzegovina reciprocated by extending help and assistance to my country, and we are very grateful for that.

Serbia continues to be firmly committed to promoting good-neighbourly relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, aimed at overcoming the negative legacy of the past and forging a common future based on the principles of mutual respect. We are convinced that the two countries should continue to develop cooperation in priority areas, both within bilateral and multilateral frameworks and through regional initiatives and mechanisms. Fostering common values can help us on our road towards achieving the same goals that bring us closer to European Union (EU) membership, which figures high on the agendas of our two countries. Serbia strongly supports the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the EU and welcomes the progress achieved by that country in this regard.

Serbia is lastingly committed to strengthening regional cooperation through numerous activities and by strictly abiding by its commitments. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a key regional partner of Serbia, and the region’s economic and other progress is paramount to its overall prosperity. To that end, the progress being achieved at the bilateral level between the two countries in the field of infrastructure projects is particularly important. Equally important in that context was the signing during the reporting period of the agreement on the maintenance and reconstruction of road inter-State bridges and the agreement on the construction and maintenance of a new common border crossing at the Bratunac/Ljubovija location, as well as the interest of our side in financing the construction of a new airport at Trebinje.

Serbia took note of the call for regular local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 15 November and is fully supportive of their holding in accordance with the highest democratic standards. We commend in particular the fact that an agreement has been reached among the key actors according to which local elections will be also held on 20 December in Mostar, where no elections have been held in the past 12 years because of the absence of agreement between Bosniak and Croatian representatives. We are pleased that representatives of the Serbian community in that town may win municipal assembly seats as well.

Serbia has invested significant efforts in the stabilization of the situation in the region and considers that, in that context, respect for the principle of territorial

integrity and sovereignty is of paramount importance. My country's position on the sovereignty and integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Dayton Agreement, of which Serbia is a guarantor, is crystal-clear: we support Bosnia and Herzegovina as one State with two entities, the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as all decisions taken by that country in accordance with the relevant competencies and agreements reached among its three constituent peoples: Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. We shall continue to cooperate actively and constructively with the central and entity authorities. We fully respect the right of each and every country to conduct independent foreign policies, including possibly joining military-political alliances, while paying heed, however, to specific individual activities that may or may not be conducive to membership in those alliances. Serbia will respect the agreements and arrangements reached by the two entities, that is, the three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in a legal and legitimate way.

Soon it will have been 25 years since the signing of the Dayton Agreement. My country would like to emphasize the need to reaffirm its importance not only in respect of its significance for ending the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the context of the stabilization of that country and the region as a whole. I would like to recall that the mechanism for a possible change in the Agreement is known and that it implies the reaching of an agreement by the two entities and the three constituent peoples; any insistence on, or imposition of, a solution by anyone inside or outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina is therefore unacceptable. We are convinced that the country can function even without changing its fundamental constituent principles by focusing on the reform package needed for Euro-integration, on which consensus does exist.

Serbia shares the concern of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina over the destabilizing rhetoric inherent in the statements of many political leaders in that country. We reiterate our principled position against recourse or the threat of recourse to unilateral acts contrary to the letter and spirit of the Dayton Agreement. After all, the Agreement is the result of a compromise and reflects a delicate balance, reached by hard work and dedication, between opposing concepts of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and subsequent attempts to favour any of the models in existence 25 years ago would not help the stabilization of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina at all.

We know that, regrettably, we cannot bring the victims back to life or undo the destruction caused by war 25 years on. What we can do, though, and what is important for the future is to condemn all crimes and bring their perpetrators to justice; have empathy for all victims irrespective of their ethnic or religious background; and embark upon the road to economic and political stability, lasting peace and common prosperity. Serbia supports the efforts to establish the full truth of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and to bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice, irrespective of their ethnic origins. In that context, my country supports regional cooperation in processing war crimes. It has concluded bilateral agreements with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia regulating various aspects of the issue of legal assistance and procedure in letters rogatory. The cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina under those agreements is at a high level indeed.

Serbia calls on all actors included in political processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as those outside of it, to be more responsible and expects international officials to bear in mind, as they assess the political actors of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their reports, the fact that they are legitimately elected representatives of the citizens of that country. My country considers that dialogue within Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions is the only way forward in furthering the level of trust and confidence and reaching compromise solutions to questions relevant to its future

development and, by extension, to the stability of the entire region. As in the past, Serbia will continue to make a maximum constructive contribution in that regard.

In conclusion, let me point out that my country will not veer away from the road to peace, stability and reconciliation. The solidarity that we have demonstrated in this crisis should serve as a model for our future activities, since there is no alternative to the policy of dialogue and cooperation.

**Annex XVIII****Statement by the Head of Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, Olof Skoog**

[Original: English and French]

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 27 member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania align themselves with this statement.

I want first to join others in thanking High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Valentin Inzko and reiterating the European Union's continued support for his mission, and I wish to add my greetings to Valentin and my appreciation for his dedication, energy, independence and integrity, which have remained constant over the years.

In December 2019, the Council of the European Union reiterated its unequivocal commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country. We urged executive and legislative bodies at all levels of Government to start addressing the 14 key priorities identified in the EU Commission opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership in the European Union, in line with the interests of all citizens to advance towards integration into the European Union.

In the past months, Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities have taken some steps to address those priorities. We welcome the fact that, for the first time since 2008, local elections will also take place in the city of Mostar, on 20 December. Political leaders also reached an agreement on 17 June on further electoral reform. We call for an inclusive process of electoral reform, through genuine dialogue and in line with European standards, which would eliminate all forms of inequality and discrimination in the electoral process. In this regard, we underline that no legislative or political step should be taken that would make the implementation of the ruling in the *Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* case and related rulings of the European Court of Human Rights more challenging.

We welcome the recent adoption of the revised national war-crimes strategy, and we call for its swift implementation, which will contribute to the wider goal of promoting an environment conducive to reconciliation. We call on the authorities of the country to build on this momentum and continue to engage in reforms, thereby giving tangible proof that Bosnia and Herzegovina is willing to do what it takes to become a member of the EU.

Only by delivering on reforms will Bosnia and Herzegovina advance towards the EU. The European Union strongly underlines the need for the authorities to work towards strengthening the rule of law, in particular the independence and integrity of the judiciary, fighting corruption and organized crime, countering radicalization and guaranteeing the independence of the media and the safety of journalists, promoting youth employment and education and gender equality, and renewing their efforts towards socioeconomic reforms.

This year marks both the twenty-fifth annual commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords. We expect to see strong and concrete political acts from the political elites that show their deep commitment to promoting reconciliation in the country. Revisionism, in particular minimization or negationism in relation to the Srebrenica genocide, and the glorification of war criminals contradict EU values and are incompatible with the prospect of integration into the European Union.

With local elections to be held on 15 November throughout the country and on 20 December in Mostar, we would like to remind all political actors of the importance of refraining from any provocative and divisive statements. We also expect the authorities to fully assume their responsibilities with regard to the migration situation, and in particular, to urgently create, with our support, the conditions for addressing humanitarian needs, including the accommodation of refugees and migrants, while working to strengthen the country's border-management capacities.

Like the rest of Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to be affected by the global coronavirus disease pandemic, a point that has been raised by many today. In these difficult times, the EU remains firmly engaged in assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina in addressing the immediate health needs as well as with the long-term social and economic impacts resulting from the pandemic. The European Commission's recent Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans demonstrates once again the EU's strong commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina and all Western Balkans partners.

Lastly, with regard to the political and security situation on the ground and the importance of maintaining a safe and secure environment, the European Union reiterates its firm support for the EU-led Operation Althea and to the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council.

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