United Nations S/PV.7308

Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7308th meeting

Tuesday, 11 November 2014, 3.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Ms. King	(Australia)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Olguín Cigarroa
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Luxembourg	Mr. Maes
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Republic of Korea	Ms. Paik Ji-ah
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Tatham
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 30 October 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/777)

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14-61864 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 30 October 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/777)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/777, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 October 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the forty-sixth report of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I now give the floor to Mr. Inzko.

Mr. Inzko: A month ago the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina went to the polls for their seventh post-war general elections. They did so just one year before the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement and against the background of ever deepening stagnation and socioeconomic hardship. Whether one reads my report (S/2014/777, annex), or the latest progress report of the European Union (EU) or the reporting of Bosnian non-governmental organizations monitoring the performance of the Government — there are quite a few reports out — one will nevertheless see that the results of the last four years fell way short of the mark.

As if all that were not enough, only a few months earlier we witnessed close to 1 million people being affected by tragic and catastrophic floods, the like of which cannot be recalled in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, I must pause for a moment to acknowledge the tremendous role played by the United Nations and its representatives on the ground in terms of coordination and information-sharing throughout the course of the flood relief efforts. The scenes I saw when I visited flood victims, days after the heavy rains that swept across the country, were truly shocking. However, a ray of hope in the disaster was the instinctive readiness of local communities and thousands of ordinary people to help each other regardless of ethnicity.

Regrettably, the parties, officials and institutions governing the country at various levels have not responded to the country's problems with the same spontaneous urgency and creativity with which everyday people responded to the floods. That is why Bosnia and Herzegovina has been on a downward trajectory since 2006. Eight years is a long time for any country to be going the wrong way.

Not surprisingly, there is a plentiful supply of disillusionment, anger and frustration. That is particularly worrying among the youth, for whom unemployment levels are above 57 per cent, among the highest rates of unemployment for young people in Europe. Those young people — the future of the country — have been particularly let down.

The situation is not good, and it must be tackled head-on. Clearly, therefore, the elections are not just another round of general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The elections are about a decisive four-year period ahead for all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens, regardless of their ethnicity or in which part of the country they live. There must now be a fundamental change — the interests of the country and its citizens must be put before those of the privileged political class.

The good news is that we have a chance to turn a new page. The start of a new mandate provides us with a timely opportunity to start afresh, a chance that cannot be wasted, to take major strides towards the lasting peace and stability that come with Euro-Atlantic integration. The integration of the region, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, into the European Union is about so much more than prosperity and raising standards. It is about healing the wounds of the past and enabling the peoples of the region to once again live

together with their compatriots without borders. That is certainly my great wish for the peoples of the region, and I know it is shared by many.

Political leaders should have no doubt whatsoever that business as usual simply will not be acceptable. We have expectations, and we expect to see complacency replaced with a sense of urgency. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community are in full unity on one very simply point: we expect a fundamental change in the way that politics is conducted. Such a change of approach is absolutely possible.

What do we need to see in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the days and weeks and months ahead to move in that direction? Overall, we expect the needs of citizens to be tackled head-on and for the country to be put back on track for Euro-Atlantic integration, the declared strategic objective of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Steps need to be taken urgently by the incoming authorities to overhaul the business environment so that new jobs can be created in the private sector. Let me take this opportunity to say once again that I fully support the European Union's Compact for Growth initiative.

Progress on Euro-Atlantic integration has to be unblocked. In that regard, I welcome the initiative announced last week by the United Kingdom and Germany to define a road map of reform to strengthen Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions and accelerate the country's progress towards the EU. I cannot stress strongly enough — it is vitally important that the incoming authorities seize this new opportunity.

From the parties that ran in the recent elections, the first thing that we need to see now is the speedy formation of Governments in a manner that is in accordance with the law, unlike what we saw in 2010. I have also challenged the authorities to appoint more women and to seek out ministerial candidates and other appointees who have the expertise, in particular in economics, to deliver the progress that is required. That can easily be done if there is a minimum of political will.

Similarly, the effort that has been put into blocking progress on issues, especially at the State level, must now be directed at delivering the healthy compromises needed to move the country forward. I expect, therefore, to see a marked improvement in the performance of State institutions in the next four years.

Next, there must be a recommitment to the rule of law and the fight against corruption. Words are not enough. We need to see hard results. Many verdicts of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court, which are "final and binding" under the terms of the Peace Agreement, remain unimplemented. They must now be implemented, including the decision on Mostar. That town's citizens must regain the basic right to elect their local officials.

Finally, challenges to Dayton and the sovereignty of the State must stop. I am appalled that some leaders still insult the intelligence of their own citizens, believing that talk of secession, division and hatred will hide their own failures to deliver a better life for people.

While they pursue a long-term strategy to drive the country into the ground in order to justify breaking the country apart — with all the risks that such a strategy entails — young people are getting older without the educational and professional opportunities that living in a functional country would provide. As the calls for a referendum on secession have been repeated time and time again in recent months, I have had to respond by reminding people of the facts: the entities do not have the right to secede under the Peace Agreement. I would like to make that clear once more: there will be no redrawing of borders.

I hope, therefore, that we will see the incoming authorities doing what is needed to get Bosnia and Herzegovina back on track quickly. Is there an alternative to this? Yes, there is. The political leaders can go on doing what they have been doing over the last eight years. If that is what they decide to do, they must know that there will almost certainly be consequences and none of us will be able to claim that we have not been warned. The February demonstrations were a clear wake-up call for the political establishment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also for the international community. While nobody can predict exactly when there will be another public backlash if the politics of the last eight years continues, it will be just a matter of time before it occurrs. That is in no one's interest.

I address Council members today not only as the High Representative, but also as a true friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina who wants the best for its people. I am aware that I have been blunt today, but there are times when the best thing you can do for a friend is to speak frankly. And this is just such a time. Those political leaders who choose to enter Government in the

coming weeks must now change their ways, and they must once and for all break the vicious downward cycle of spiteful tit-for-tat politics that has led us to this point. Just as Bosnians and Herzegovinans must raise their game, so must the international community, because our job in Bosnia and Herzegovina has clearly not been completed.

This is a time to reaffirm our commitment to a united and reintegrated Bosnia and Herzegovina and to be more united than ever as we seek to support the delivery of the deep and sometimes painful changes that are required for the country to be functional, stable and prosperous. Those politicians and people who want to work together in good faith to take the country forward will have our full and active support. Similarly, those who seek to advocate division and secession must finally understand that the drawing of borders in Bosnia and Herzegovina is behind us.

The future is not about dividing people. It is about coming together to build a better tomorrow. As I witnessed personally two days ago at the moving ceremony marking the fall of the Berlin Wall, this is a future of building a better tomorrow — not of dividing, but of coming together.

The President: I thank Mr. Inzko for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Murmokaité (Lithuania): At the outset, I would like to warmly welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the Security Council and to thank him for his report (S/2014/777, annex).

We welcome the adoption of resolution 2183 (20014), which was submitted by my delegation, acting in its capacity as a rotating Chair of the contact and drafting group, extending the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea for a period of 12 months. We thank the delegations concerned for their cooperation in drafting the resolution. We also express our appreciation to the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for its insights and frankness of exchanges over the past few weeks as we were drafting the resolution. Its message to us on its country's European Union (EU) perspectives could not have been more clear. It is that delegation's firm choice, and has been so for years, supported by all political forces and groups within the country, and should be respected by all. The resolution that the Council adopted today reflects that choice and is an important signal of the international community's support to the European perspective for and broad engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Lithuania shares the findings of the most recent report of the High Representative. Euro-Atlantic integration provides the framework and incentive for reform. Inclusive and wide-ranging reforms are needed to achieve tangible progress in moving forward towards that goal. We note that some of the recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina have great potential to generate a new momentum in the country.

On 12 October, Bosnia and Herzegovina held its seventh general elections, which were conducted in an orderly manner in a competitive environment. We are concerned, however, that the recent elections saw manifestations of inter-ethnic divide in the country. We urge the elected leaders of all ethnic groups to fundamentally change the way politics is conducted, to reach out to the people and to chart, in close cooperation with civil society, a path towards irreversible progress. Swift Government formation at all levels is crucial, since what citizens need the most are properly functioning institutions capable of responding promptly and in a comprehensive manner to their legitimate needs and concerns. Implementing legislation and initiatives on strengthening the rule of law, combatting corruption and financial accountability are matters of immediate priority.

At the same time, we note that the mass protests that took place at the beginning of the year and the readiness of the local communities to work together and assist their neighbours in need after the severe flooding in May signal that beyond the divisive rhetoric that still occurs on the political level, there is a real interest in that multi-ethnic society to mobilize and seek common solutions for the country's future. We appreciate the solidarity shown by many countries and international organizations and their respective contributions in response to the floods that devastated Bosnia and Herzegovina and to ongoing reconstruction efforts. The continued commitment of the international community is essential so that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not left alone to deal with the consequences of that terrible natural disaster.

The EU remains actively engaged in supporting the country in its reform process and efforts to foster positive changes that are a prerequisite for strengthening

stability in the country. In July, the EU presented the Compact for Growth and Jobs, a package of ready-to-go economic and social reforms that, according to experts, are needed to overhaul the country's economic and social base. As an immediate action, it is aimed at addressing the country's unemployment level, improve economic governance and create a better business environment.

The Dayton Peace Agreement was a necessary tool to end the worst war in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Collective political will and putting the country's interests first are now needed to enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to progress towards the shared vision of a united, stable and prosperous country, cooperating peacefully with its neighbours and moving towards membership of the European Union. In that regard, we share the concerns of the High Representative regarding the destabilizing effects of the various secessionist statements made by a number of Republika Srpska officials who persist in challenging the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well about obstructive actions at state-level institutions that impede Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to meet its international obligations.

We are convinced that, with the political will and collective determination, Bosnia and Herzegovina will be able to pick up speed on its reform track. The EU's Compact for Growth and Jobs is an opportunity not to be missed so that the country can regain its upward trajectory in the nearest future.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, who has briefed us today.

To paint an objective picture of developments in the Bosnia and Herzegovina process, we recommend that the members of the Security Council carefully familiarize themselves with the twentieth report of the Republika Srpska to the Secretary-General and the Security Council, in which the commitment of Bosnian Serbs to international law and the spirit of Dayton is clear.

We sympathize with the leadership and population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in May and August experienced catastrophic flooding. Russia backed international efforts to alleviate the consequences, and our Ministry of Emergency Situations sent substantive volumes of humanitarian shipments to both entities.

We agree that the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains stable. October's elections were democratic and recognized as successful. They again reaffirmed the ability of local parties to resolve their issues without relying on the international protectorate. We deem it important that the process of forming new bodies of authority in the country should take place without external interference, first and foremost that of the High Representative. In the post-electoral period, the international community should prioritize efforts to promote the development of inclusive inter-Bosnian dialogue and the search by both sides for mutually acceptable options for socioeconomic and structural reform, in keeping with the Dayton mechanisms and principles.

In the post-conflict settlement process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the finalization of the implementation of the 5+2 agenda remains of priority importance. We deem it unacceptable to infuse it with new concepts related to the integration of the country into the European Union and NATO. The High Representative must definitively and finally reject the use of his emergency Bonn powers. Like other problems that remain unresolved within the framework of the 5+2 agenda, issues of fundamental importance to the future of the country must be resolved by the Bosnians themselves through inclusive dialogue and on the basis of the consent of the three peoples of the State.

We are convinced that the potential of external oversight of the situation by the mechanism of the High Representative has exhausted itself. There is no need to seek artificial reasons to preserve the mechanism. On the contrary, we should work towards its timely conclusion. We note once again that the standard criticism of the leadership of the Republika Srpska repeated in the reports of the High Representative is unwarranted, destructive and harmful. The continuous accusations levelled against Bosnian Serbs and Croats, undermining the Dayton foundations of the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, add further tension to relations among the Bosnian sides and interferes with their dialogue.

Instead of piling on its shrill rebukes of the Republika Srpska, the international presence should give greater attention to the growing threat of militant Islam in the country and to problem of radical Islamist

fighters leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations active in Iraq and Syria. In that context, we welcome the efforts of Sarajevo to strengthen the criminal responsibility of fighters, illegal armed formations abroad and their accomplices.

Following the end of the destructive armed conflict in 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina was able to achieve concrete results towards a settlement. That is why the decisive vector of the peace process should remain the transfer of responsibility for what takes place in the country to the Bosnians themselves.

Mrs. Kawar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing. Jordan notes the recommendations contained in the High Representative's forty-sixth report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2014/777, annex).

We deplore the ongoing deterioration of the situation, especially regarding crucial major reforms on many issues vital to Bosnia's future. The reforms will take place only when the political actors decide to overcome their differences, and we call on them to do so.

My delegation voted in favour of resolution 2183 (2014), renewing the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea for another year. Its continued presence will enable the implementation of the Peace Agreement, strengthen capacities and assist Bosnia and Herzegovina according to its specific needs. We note the recent efforts of those forces, for example in ensuring stability during the latest elections. That is why their presence is of the greatest importance for lasting peace and reassures the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serious efforts on the part of all members of Bosnian society to rebuild political and social coexistence and to pursue the path towards peace demonstrate civil society's ability to achieve stability and to raise their country through combined efforts, despite the tragic conflict experienced in the region. Furthermore, such efforts sound a warning to all who would seek illegal secession, which is a continuing source of concern to my country. We therefore affirm the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina in October were a major step forward for the country. However, it will continue only if the winners in the elections demonstrate political resolve and unity to realize the hopes and aspirations of the voters who went to the polls following the protests earlier in the year in order to ensure a better future for themselves and the generations to come. The reaffirmation of political will by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the polls represented a ray of hope. The elections reinforced Bosnians' nationalist orientations, but the results called for unity in creating a society that recognizes all nationalities and where they can recognize each other, without exclusion, in the common interest of full citizenship for all.

The socioeconomic problems of the country after the war are growing following many major shocks to the economy, in particular the recent floods, all of which call for international assistance to help the country restore its economic fortunes. Indeed, the major problem is the failure to attract investment. The precarious situation and political inertia in Bosnia and Herzegovina represent both a threat and a danger. We call on the authorities to continue to promote broad participation in political life, taking into account the concerns of all minorities. We appreciate the efforts of the neighbouring countries and countries of the region.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing and for his forty-sixth report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2014/777, annex). We have carefully studied the report and taken due note of the main issues contained therein.

On the general elections of 12 October, we note the preliminary assessment of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights that a lack of shared vision for the country's future and of cooperation among the three main communities has hindered efforts to fully ensure democratic elections. In that regard, we urge the communities to set aside their differences and work together to strengthen the democratic process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Now that the election results have been confirmed, the next critical step in the political process will be the formation of a federal Government. We would recall that it took more than a year for the parties to form a Government after the elections of 2010. It is our hope that all parties will work to avoid a repeat of that

experience and form a federal Government without delay. Tackling the country's socioeconomic challenges requires that a Government be in place to lead the way.

The continued presence of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) and NATO is essential to overseeing the implementation of the Peace Agreement. The extension of EUFOR's mandate for a further 12-month period will, we believe, foster stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a necessary condition for development. The international community must continue to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in the implementation of the Peace Agreement, the reconstruction of civil society, the attainment of economic progress and the return of refugees. The primary responsibility for implementing the Peace Agreement lies nevertheless with the Government and people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On the five objectives and two conditions set by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council as prerequisites for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, we share the concerns of the High Representative over the lack of progress on the outstanding objectives and criteria. We urge the authorities to demonstrate commitment to the reform process in order to facilitate its full implementation.

We once again call on political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from nationalistic and separatist rhetoric that threatens the peace and stability of the country and escalates tensions in the region. Political leaders, especially at the state level, must bear in mind that the Constitution precludes the possibility of secession. All parties must demonstrate unwavering respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They must also support efforts to strengthen the State at the national level, while preserving the rights and prerogatives of all communities.

Ms. Paik Ji-ah (Republic of Korea): We would first like to welcome High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Council and express our appreciation for his briefing. The Republic of Korea continues to support his valuable efforts to ensure the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As the High Representative elaborated, almost 20 years after its civil war, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains on a difficult road to stability. Chronic political stagnation and a fragile socioeconomic situation have been obstacles in its path to becoming a stable, prosperous and democratic country. While we welcome the positive developments achieved so far, such as the progress in functionalizing the Vital Interest Panel of the Federation Constitutional Court, it is regrettable that we have been witnessing an ongoing stand-off among political actors, even during the election campaign period. Such a protracted power struggle not only hinders stable governance, it also undermines the country's progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

The slow response to the devastating floods in May is another reflection of the country's weak governance. We are particularly disappointed in the authorities' slow provision of help to the families who lost their livelihoods in the aftermath of the severe floods, mainly due to the absence of a coherent recovery strategy. Indeed, the protests that broke out last spring were clear evidence of citizens' desire for better governance, increased economic equality and an end to corruption. Those are all legitimate demands by the people and they must be heard.

In that regard, the latest elections in October provided for a chance to break away from the past and chart a new political course. We welcome the orderly conduct of the elections and commend the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the High Representative for their contribution to ensuring a secure electoral process throughout the country. However, the reports of irregularities and the high number of spoiled or invalid ballots are matters of serious concern and need to be duly addressed. Looking ahead, we hope that the Government and institutions can be formed in a timely manner so that new leadership can proceed to address the key challenges the country is facing. The new assertiveness of civil society should also remain as a counterweight to hold political representatives more accountable.

Another issue that must be considered seriously in this context is the worrying divisive rhetoric and open advocacy for the dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, we call upon the leaders of the Republika Srpska to refrain from such secessionist rhetoric and make every effort towards national reconciliation with a vision of a shared future. We also reiterate our full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is an intrinsic principle built into the Dayton Peace Agreement.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea welcomes the extension of the mandate of the European Union-led

peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina Operation Althea and supports its continued role in maintaining a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish to begin by thanking the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing and for his sincere, direct statements, which are those of a true friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I also associate myself with the statement to be made later by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to be delayed in comparison to that of its neighbours with respect to drawing closer to the European Union. Mr. Inzko's report (S/2014/777, annex) notes a number concerns and I will not dwell on them. I will focus on three points in my statement.

First of all, after having clearly shown their dissatisfaction last February, Bosnians went to the polls in October in similar proportions to those that are usually expected in other European countries, which bears witness to their appropriation of the democratic exercise. Even if the elections took place in a tense environmnet, there was no deterioration of the security situation, putting the February demonstrations in their true place. Their excesses were a deplorable yet isolated episode; they were, above all, a profound call of Bosnian society to the elite that governs it.

The main victors of the elections are the nationalist leaders of a long-standing political class that until now has shown that it is unable to make the country's institutions work, respond to the needs of the population or even create prospects for the future. But we note with satisfaction that the election campaign also dealt with socioeconomic concerns of Bosnians, leaving room for hope that ethnic dividing lines will disappear in time from the political arena. A new political consciousness is gradually emerging, which makes it possible to truly respond to the aspirations of the people. We must work collectively to give them a long-term perspective that favours that emergence.

Secondly, the prospect of European integration is the only viable way forward for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That prospect must function as it has in the rest of the Balkans as a catalyst for the transformation of the country. It is a mistake to say that this perspective is imposed from the outside world against the will of the population. It is the will of the Bosnians themselves, as recalled by their representative here at the United Nations just seven weeks ago (see A/69/PV.12).

This hope bears witness to the attraction that the European Union has never failed to exercise and is, inter alia, the factor for cohesion and movement forward in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We affirm our commitment to seeing Bosnia and Herzegovina join the European Union as a united, sovereign country enjoying its full territorial integrity. All of Europe sends that message to Bosnians.

Denying that prospect to Bosnia and Herzegovina is the expression of a will to keep it in a fragile, precarious situation, at the mercy of the national slippages that lead to the tragedies we have seen elsewhere. Giving ground to this discredited political class is what keeps Bosnia and Herzegovina in a rut.

On the contrary, it is the responsibility of the Security Council to celebrate the positive effect of the European prospect for Bosnia and Herzegovina's security, as we do through the resolution we have just adopted (resolution 2183 (2014)). Denying it would be neglecting the Council's responsibilities and demonstrating ignorance with respect to the role that European Union plays in the Balkans.

In that connection, we regret that the Russian Federation abstained in the voting, when it could play a positive role when it comes to the historic and cultural links that join it to the Balkans. We regret that Russia tried to expose an artificial disunity in the Security Council on a subject on which there is in fact unanimity. The European Union acts on all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina in response to the immediate needs of the population, assisting the country's authorities so that they can take the necessary reform measures to make their country function properly.

In that context, the European Union-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR) Operation Althea is intervening to support the authorities in a residual fashion. EUFOR Althea plays decisive role in permitting the Bosnian security forces to work autonomously, and thus to participate in the emergence of a peaceful society looking towards the future. Given that we have just voted in favour of authorizing the deployment of the mission, it is normal that we recall the framework in which EUFOR Operation Althea operates: the mission operates on the ground based on

the policy of integrateing Bosnia and Herzegovina into the European context.

The last point I want to make is that the framework inherited from Dayton continues to be the framework of reference for action by the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. High Representative Inzko, guarantor of the Peace Accords, has our full support. We recall that all parties have the obligation to cooperate with him and his Office pursuant to the Accords. We also call on all the constituent parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to stop all nationalist rhetoric and put an end to any actions or intentions that could divide country. Our message is clear: there can be no calling into question of Bosnia and Herzegovina's territorial integrity.

The process of reconfiguring the Office of the High Representative remains ongoing. It is important that it continue in order to bolster the consistency of the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina through an increasingly close cooperation with the head of the European Union delegation in the country.

Mr. Olguín Cigarroa (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing and for the presentation of his report (S/2014/777, annex).

We begin by welcoming the results of the general elections held on 12 October, and we commend the fact that they were held in an orderly way. We also note the concerns expressed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe electoral observation mission and we call for elected leaders to act swiftly to ensure the creation of the new Government without delay. Similarly, we call on all political leaders to take this opportunity to move towards true national integration and reconciliation and to refrain from negative rhetoric. Such acts undermine the cohesion among the various ethnic communities in the country, hinder national reconciliation and slow the country's progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Given the challenges resulting from the severe floods and landslides that affected many communities in both entities this year, we consider it important that the new authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina work together to address the challenges facing the country as it moves towards membership in the European Union and NATO.

We support the efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to overcome its past, and highlight the important work being done in the exhumation, identification and return of the remains of people missing as a result of the armed conflict and human rights violations. Chile's experience shows the importance of that process for national reconciliation, which is why our country experts have held several meetings with Bosnian authorities and technical staff with a view to enhancing their knowledge of methodologies and techniques for the search for and identification of victims.

We reiterate the firm commitment that our country has shown from the beginning to the process aimed at achieving a stable Bosnia and Herzegovina that is committed to defending its territorial integrity in a politically stable State with functioning institutions in the service of its people and to creating jobs, especially for young people, in peace and prosperity. Chile participated in the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina with police personnel and continues to do so today in the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation Althea. Last year marked 10 years of uninterrupted Chilean military presence there. We believe that the presence of EUFOR Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina remains vital, which is why we supported the renewal of its mandate for a further 12 months.

Similarly, we call upon the international community to maintain its commitment to supporting the aspirations of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in a Euro-Atlantic future and to provide the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate under the 1995 Dayton Agreement.

Finally, I would like to reiterate our support to the Office of the High Representative, which should continue to receive political support to carry out its important functions.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing.

In recent times, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has remained stable. There has been positive progress in economic development and building the rule of law. China welcomes that development.

China respects the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We believe that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have the right to determine their own development path and diplomatic policy. The international community should respect the choices made by the people and Government

of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the future of the country.

We welcome the smooth conduct of the general elections on 12 October, which we believe will create enabling conditions for ethnic unity, harmony, cooperation and joint efforts to achieve development. China hopes that all ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina will consolidate the positive achievements in State-buidling and continue to implement in a comprehensive manner the Dayton Peace Agreement so as to achieve greater progress in various areas.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important country in the Balkan region. Maintaining peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the common interests of the countries of the region and the international community. Currently, efforts to achieve sustainable economic and social development and lasting peace in the country are facing complex difficulties and challenges and continue to require the assistance of the international community. The international community, when addressing the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina, should adopt a balanced and cautious approach and give due attention to the opinions and concerns of all parties.

China supports High Representative Inzko in conducting his work in accordance with his mandate and in a stable and constructive manner, so as to play a positive role in advancing the political process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Tatham (United Kingdom): I welcome High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Council and thank him for his twelfth report to the Secretary-General (S/2014/777, annex). Once more, his report highlights honestly and objectively the challenges that Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to face and the crucial importance of the international community's engagement in the country.

The United Kingdom is grateful to the High Representative for his commitment to the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The United Kingdom shares the concern of the High Representative at the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The picture is a depressing one, not just in respect of this reporting period but over the past four years. It is hard to see this period as anything other than a wasted electoral term, characterized largely by stagnation — an electoral term in which the narrow interests of the political class and short-sighted squabbling over sectional interests have prevailed over a commitment to reform, to good governance and to delivering change that will benefit all citizens.

The statistics paint a bleak picture: a four-year parliamentary term in which a total of only 14 new pieces of legislation were adopted, an unemployment rate that stands at about 44 per cent, with youth unemployment at 60 per cent, and too many university graduates failing to find employment in the country or leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina behind for opportunities elsewhere. The situation is unsustainable. It does a huge disservice to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Urgent change is needed.

The elections that took place in October offer an opportunity for progress. The first step must be the swift formation of a reform-minded Government. That is crucial if Bosnia and Herzegovina is to break out of its current malaise. The challenges facing the country are too great for there to be a lengthy hiatus while its politicians argue over who gets what job. Once a Government is formed, it should focus on the policy and priorities that will deliver real change for the population.

The protests that took place in February and the plenums that sprung up at the same time demonstrate the depths of public frustration with the status quo. Politicians must heed those clear calls for change. Urgent reforms are needed to improve growth, tackle corruption and create jobs. The population of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve a political leadership that strives to deliver on those goals. The terrible flooding that devastated large parts of the region this year adds to the importance of quick Government formation and speedy focus on the immediate challenges facing the country, including work to implement necessary relief for those affected by the flooding.

The United Kingdom welcomes the work of the European Union (EU) in responding to the population's socioeconomic concerns. In particular, we welcome the excellent work of the EU delegation in Sarajevo, led until recently by Peter Sørensen. Under his leadership, the Compact for Growth and Jobs in Bosnia and Herzegovina provided a platform for Bosnian society to engage with its political leaders and express their desires and frustrations. It will now be up to the new Bosnian Government to take the necessary steps to improve the business climate, increase social protection and promote enterprise.

The United Kingdom is utterly committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's future membership in the European Union and NATO. Last week in Berlin, the Foreign Secretary and the German Minister for Foreign Affairs announced a United Kingdom-German initiative to reinvigorate Bosnia and Herzegovina's Euro-Atlantic perspective. It is clear that stabilizing and stimulating Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy should be a priority. Reforms aimed at doing that should not wait while other issues remain intractable.

There were aspects of the recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina that gave us cause for concern. The narrow and divisive nationalism that characterized some leaders' rhetoric was unacceptable. We are clear that the focus of some on difference and division must end. Leaders must stop thinking along ethnic lines and start thinking about what will deliver economic progress to the country as a whole.

There is no prospect of Bosnia and Herzegovina joining the European Union as anything other than a single, sovereign State. Public statements about separation or referendums take the country nowhere. They are not going to happen. The United Kingdom has a binding legal responsibility to protect Bosnia and Herzegovina's territorial integrity. We remain as committed to that responsibility now as we were 19 years ago, when the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed. The redrawing of the map in the Balkans is finished. The road forward involves reform and Euro-Atlantic integration on the basis of the Peace Agreement, as stated in resolution 2183 (2014), which we have just adopted.

We remain concerned by the security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is clear to us that stability is not yet entrenched. February's protests demonstrated how quickly the population's discontent can spiral into widespread unrest. Until stability is entrenched, the deterrence provided by the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina's (EUFOR) Operation Althea will remain crucial.

We welcome the Security Council's renewal of EUFOR's mandate for a further 12 months. We note with disappointment that the resolution was not adopted by consensus this year, for the first time in 14 years. The Russian Federation's position this year of opposing previously agreed references in the resolution to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Euro-Atlantic perspective is cynical and deeply regrettable. Nothing has changed in respect of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina to justify such an approach. To adopt such an obstructive position, to argue that the Euro-Atlantic perspective is being imposed from outside, shows contempt for the established and widespread support in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the country's Euro-Atlantic direction. It speaks volumes about the zero-sum, with-us-or-against-us mindset that Russia is applying to this and other foreign-policy issues.

Mr. Pressman (United States): I wish to thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing today. The United States continues to support his mandate under the General Framework Agreement for Peace. We commend his work and offer him our strong support for his role as a member of the Peace Implementation Council.

Before commenting on High Representative Inzko's briefing, I would like to say a few words about the resolution that was just adopted by the Council (resolution 2183 (2014)). This Chapter VII mandate renewal reaffirms the Council's willingness to support the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their efforts to sustain a safe and secure environment with the assistance of the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR) and NATO headquarters Sarajevo, and to implement the civilian aspects of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, with the help of the Office of the High Representative.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has expressed without reservation its strong support for this mandate renewal and for all of the language therein. The United States joins Bosnia and Herzegovina and the members of the Security Council and the European Union Foreign Affairs Council in our continued support for the EUFOR mandate. We are disappointed that one delegation did not join the consensus in responding to Bosnia and Herzegovina's own request for continued Security Council support.

This has been a highly eventful and important year for Bosnia and Herzegovina. In February, thousands of protesters in cities across the country joined together to express dissatisfaction with the economic and political stagnation. Although the protests briefly, and regrettably, turned violent, and although some political actors attempted to use the protest to discourage public discourse and stoke ethnic tensions, the plenums that resulted from the protests provided a positive and peaceful venue for active political engagement.

Shortly after our May debate in the Council (see S/PV.7176), Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced severe flooding that resulted in dozens of deaths and displaced thousands from their homes. The flooding also contributed to economic concerns, causing billions of dollars in damage. As the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina work towards recovery, they are undoubtedly more aware than ever of the need for properly functioning democratic institutions and for political leaders who will work together at all levels to make social and economic progress.

In that regard, the United States commends Bosnia and Herzegovina on having held general elections this October. The elections were orderly and conducted in a competitive environment, although we also cannot ignore the fact that there were several irregularities, as noted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe observation mission. As finalized results are expected today, it is our hope that governments will form as quickly as possible and that the elected representatives of the people will look for ways to move the country forward positively and to compromise where needed.

Further, we call on the political parties and institutions to meet their obligations to implement the ruling of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court on the electoral system for Mostar.

We support Bosnia and Herzegovina's long-expressed goal of Euro-Atlantic integration and continue to believe that the integration process is the surest and most expeditious path to the country's long-term stability and prosperity. We note that Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterated this goal during the recent general debate, in which Serb member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Radmanović stated unequivocally that his country's ultimate goal was "full legal integration into the European Union" (see A/69/PV.12).

Euro-Atlantic integration will not happen without continued efforts by a variety of stakeholders. We welcome the reform initiative proposed by the British and German Foreign Ministers last week to get the country back on track for European Union (EU) membership, and we will work with our European partners to support the adoption and implementation of this reform agenda. We also will work with Bosnia and Herzegovina's newly elected leaders to press for the resolution of the listing of defence properties in order to activate its NATO membership action plan.

We hope that the new Government seriously engages on the reform agenda to build a more effective, democratic and prosperous State and to progress towards the country's goals of EU and NATO integration.

As the High Representative noted in paragraph 12 of his report (S/2014/777), authorities have again failed to make any concrete progress on the outstanding "five plus two" objectives and the conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. We also share his concern over the Republika Srpska's lack of compliance with its obligation to provide the High Representative with timely access to officials, institutions and documents, and we urge the relevant authorities to comply.

The United States strongly supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina as guaranteed by the Dayton Peace Accords. We note that some political leaders persist in their attempts to use divisive rhetoric to distract the public from economic and political stagnation. The recent elections prove that an increasing majority of citizens are tired of these distractions and seek true leadership from their officials. We condemn divisive rhetoric and during the coalition formation period we urge parties to seek partners that are prepared to work towards a future for all of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Finally, I wish once again to reiterate the support of the United States for the renewal of the EUFOR mandate under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. The United States commends the work of NATO headquarters Sarajevo and the EUFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we believe that EUFOR and NATO headquarters Sarajevo, successors to the Stabilization Force, are essential in sustaining a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, providing vital capacity-building to the Government and offering reassurance across ethnic lines that the international community is committed to the country's stability.

We remain hopeful for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we will continue to work with the international community and with the country's institutions to encourage progress in each of these areas and to improve the lives of its citizens.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I, too, should like to thank the High Representative, Valentin Inzko, for his briefing, as well as, of course, his longstanding work for all Bosnians. I welcome

also the presence here among us of the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Luxembourg wishes to associate itself with the statement to be made later by the observer of the European Union.

The security situation remained calm and stable during the period covered by the report of the High Representative (S/2014/777). Bosnia's authorities were able to preserve that secure environment. The European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR) did not have to intervene to restore peace. This has been the case for a long time now, and this is something that all of us should welcome.

However, we regret the fact that the Bosnian authorities and political leaders were not able to move forward a whole set of reforms, including the setting up of the necessary conditions to ensure that the country is able to progress on the path to Euro-Atlantic integration. We are also concerned by the separatist rhetoric — rhetoric likely to sow the seeds of division — that continues to be heard from several political leaders, especially those of the Republika Srpska.

The successful holding of elections on 12 October presents an opportunity to give renewed impetus to the reforms that will be crucial to the country's sustainable development. The top priority should be continuing talks between the political leaders with a view to forming a new Government, capable of responding to the legitimate concerns of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens, as soon as possible.

The challenges are many. The people expect their elected officials to take the necessary measures to improve the country's socioeconomic situation, which was weakened even more by the severe floods that hit Bosnia and Herzegovina in May. The international community as a whole, and the European Union in particular, have been standing by Bosnia and Herzegovina through their provision of significant aid aimed at dealing with the flood damage, including mine clearance, and supporting the country at the economic level, especially through the Compact for Growth launched in Sarajevo in May.

The newly elected representatives will also have to enact the institutional reforms that Bosnia and Herzegovina needs in order to make progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration, a pathway that corresponds to the desires of the great majority of Bosnians. In that regard, implementing the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the Sejdić-Finci case will be particularly significant, since it ensures the equality of all citizens before the law. Euro-Atlantic integration is part and parcel of the international community's strategy aimed at ensuring Bosnia and Herzegovina's integrity, stability and prosperity, which has been consistently shared and reaffirmed by the country's political leaders at every level, including the presidency. In that context, the European Union is providing Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions and citizens with ongoing, concrete and multifaceted support in the areas of the rule of law, institutional reform designed to establish an effective system of governance, the maintenance of public order and security, and economic reform.

With today's adoption of resolution 2183 (2014), which extends the mandate of the European-led peacekeeping force's Operation Althea for 12 months, the Security Council has reaffirmed the international community's support for the European Union's active involvement in promoting Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability and security, with the close cooperation of the Office of the High Representative and the international community.

Throughout its tenure as a member of the Security Council, Luxembourg has reaffirmed its conviction that Bosnia and Herzegovina's future as a united, sovereign, multi-ethnic, stable, prosperous State, enjoying full territorial integrity, does indeed lie within the European Union. It can continue to count on Luxembourg's support in the future in achieving its European destiny.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to begin by thanking the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for presenting his report on the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2014/777, annex). I would also like to welcome the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ms. Mirsada Čolaković.

Argentina continues to support the Dayton Peace Agreement and the defence and preservation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The effective implementation of the Agreement, together with respect for the rule of law, is also essential to achieving a lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We emphasize the importance of critically evaluating the international community's current focus in order to

enable it to provide the country with effective support designed to help it achieve permanent progress that responds to its citizens' aspirations.

We welcome the conclusion of the seventh general election held in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the signing of the General Framework Agreement and the fact that it took place in an atmosphere conducive to democratic competition. We call for increased efforts to overcome ethnic divisions and forge a shared vision for future cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina's constituent peoples.

Argentina would also like to express its solidarity with the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the wake of the floods that hit the country in May and the subsequent heavy rain in August, which affected thousands who were already in a vulnerable situation, killing at least 20 people and causing widespread damage. We acknowledge and appreciate the international community's cooperation and contributions in helping Bosnia and Herzegovina deal with the reconstruction efforts, and would also like to express our respect for the people and authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the recognition that we must all work to alleviate human suffering.

While we see clearly the worthlessness of the excuses, traps and petty interests of political, economic or social leaders aimed at restricting or hindering the effective exercise anywhere of human rights, democracy and peace, we also know that there are times in countries, developed and developing alike, when the legitimate demands of our peoples should not be ignored. Today our peoples can demonstrate freely in the streets for more rights and greater participation and social justice, while we also know that those demands cannot be satisfied with the wave of a magic wand. What we do know is that the effort must be made to respond and the courage shown to find the best pathway, through better policies, greater democracy and full participation in society. Like other colleagues, we believe that development based on economic growth and social inclusion should be every country's expression of its free responsibility.

As it has done in the past, Argentina urges that progress be made in implementing the remaining requirements of the five objectives and two conditions needed to close the Office of the High Representative. At the same time, we should continue to receive reports on the ongoing challenges to the authorities of the central Government from its entities. The challenges presented by the lack of implementation of the decisions of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Constitutional Court should be taken seriously. We remain concerned about the reports referring to statements by senior Republika Srpska officials advocating the dissolution of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thus challenging the core provisions of the General Framework Agreement for Peace and Bosnia and Herzegovina's territorial integrity.

While it has not been possible to hold local elections in Mostar, owing to the inability to apply the Constitutional Court's 2010 ruling on the city's electoral system and make progress in implementing the decision of the European Court of Human Rights on the Sejdić-Finci case, Argentina urges that this be accomplished. With respect, we appeal to the political leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to respond to repeated requests by redoubling its efforts to reach an agreement on implementing the Constitutional Court's ruling, which will ensure respect for the rule of law and enable elections to be held in Mostar, as well as an agreement that will ensure the protection of the rights of its non-constituent peoples. Any negative trend must be reversed, and the existing obstacles must be overcome. It is increasingly necessary to get a better grasp of the underlying reasons explaining the lack of progress. That would also be a way for the international community to adopt an approach and continue working together with Bosnia and Herzegovina, while providing support in the most effective way possible.

We underscore as a positive development the progress made in overcoming the deadlock in the group tasked with considering issues of vital national interest of the federal Constitutional Court.

In conclusion, Argentina reiterates its support for the work of the Office of the High Representative in implementing the civil aspects of the Dayton Agreement, as well as its efforts to ensure that governmental bodies are able to satisfy the terms of the Peace Sgreement and the State Constitution. We believe it is crucial that the Office continue receiving the sufficient resources and political support to complete its mandate pursuant to the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Mr. Gombo (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his briefing.

The developments and circumstances characterizing the period from 21 April to 21 October 2014 in Bosnia

and Herzegovina show that the process of building peace is a complex one that faces constant challenges. Three factors illustrate this complexity in particular: the floods, which have made the humanitarian situation in the country even more fragile; the general elections, which polarize the political scene; and, lastly, the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which are being contested by a segment of the population.

First of all, in May 2014, we received the shocking reports and images of the floods and landslides that occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina — a natural disaster that provoked the displacement of hundreds of thousands of persons and destroyed thousands of homes. More tragic still, the floods also resulted in the displacement of landmines and other unexploded munitions from the 1992-1994 war, exposing 70 per cent of the flooded area to risk. The economic impact of the disaster is estimated at €2.04 billion, which is almost 15 per cent of Bosnia Herzegovina's gross domestic product.

Despite the rapid response of the international community, several months on the country has yet to recover from the disaster. Chad encourages the national authorities to redouble their efforts to define a comprehensive strategy to coordinate the various initiatives to reintegrate the vulnerable population as winter approaches. Contingency planning should also be developed to deal with such catastrophes in the future.

The seventh general elections for the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina were hold on 2 October. The polls were conducted in an orderly manner, with an overall participation rate of 55 per cent. According to the final results, the nationalist parties largely dominated the elections, and the Croat, Serb and Muslim nationalists will form a tripartite presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, pursuant to the Dayton Agreement of 1995. Chad expresses its concern with regard to the calls for the secession of the Republika Srpska. Moreover, we believe that the disputes over State property in the municipalities of Kalinovik and Foca, the legislative gridlock resulting from the use of vetos, the administrative non-cooperation and the refusal of transport, information and documents must be resolved in the framework of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Dayton Agreement and the principles of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the same vein, Chad calls on all parties involved to exhibit calm and restraint and urges them to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with full respect for the rights of minorities.

In conclusion, Chad notes with satisfaction that, despite the complex humanitarian, political and constitutional context, the security situation in the country remains calm and stable. In that regard, we welcome the good cooperation between the Office of the High Representative, the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe towards the implementation of the Peace Agreement. However, efforts must continue to fulfil the five objectives and two conditions for the Office of the High Representative to be closed. We trust that the desire for peace motivating the parties involved will allow for stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina to be strengthened.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for presenting the forty-sixth report (S/2014/777, annex) on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina. We commend his continued support to the parties in the country towards the full implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace. I also recognize the presence among us of the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In May this year, Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced devastating floods that killed 20 people, displaced 90,000 people, destroyed over 2,000 homes and damaged infrastructure. Rwanda is concerned by the economic impact of this disaster, which has amounted to more than €2 billion. We applaud the international community for the solidarity shown towards the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are particularly encouraged by the outcome of the international donors conference held on 16 July in Brussels, which resulted in significant pledges, critical to the recovery of the affected communities.

Rwanda welcomes the holding, on 12 October, of free, fair and orderly elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as attested by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe monitoring team. Despite reported irregularities in some polling stations, we commend the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina for enabling their people to exercise their right to vote in a peaceful environment. However, we regret that the elections in Mostar, which were set

to take place in October, were not held. We urge all political parties involved to seek a way out, with a view to ending the gridlock and implement the 2010 ruling of the Constitutional Court. In that regard, we encourage the authorities to consider Mr. Inzko's letter to the Joint Collegium of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly, with a proposal for a one-time local elections.

We hope that the elected authorities will make the necessary reforms to address, as a matter of priority, the socioeconomic situation in the country, particularly youth unemployment, which has reached a dangerous rate — approximately 60 per cent. In that regard, it is unfortunate that, despite the February demonstrations, which should have been a wake-up call, political tension and gridlock persists in the country.

In that context, we remain concerned by the continued failure to make any progress on the outstanding 5+2 objectives to meet the prerequisite for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. The stalemate in the political situation is an impediment for the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to reach their Euro-Atlantic integration goal. We hope that the benefits of such integration will be a driving factor for resolving the gridlock. In that regard, we recognize the important contribution of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea for the security and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past years.

As Rwanda has stated in previous debates, we find it unfortunate that so much effort is devoted to divisive rhetoric that undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge the ruling party in the Republika Srpska to engage in a constructive manner that is geared towards nation-building and to disassociate itself from statements publicly advocating for the secession and dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As recalled by Mr. Valentin Inzko, self-determination in this case would be a blatant violation of the Constitution and the Dayton Peace Accords. We call on the political actors in the country to act responsibly and to always promote reconciliation and national unity.

Rwanda notes that, under the period under review, there was no vote on any of the proposals submitted to correct the systematic discrimination addressed by the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdić-Finci* case. We hope that the current Parliamentary Assembly will consider those important proposals that would create an environment with equal rights for all, including minorities.

I will conclude by recalling that Bosnia and Herzegovina is preparing to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica. In that respect, Rwanda welcomes the adoption, by the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, of amendments to entity criminal code to make genocide denial a criminal offence. As we believe that fighting genocide denial is critical for reconciliation and healing, we hope that there will soon be a consensus on that issue in the country. Let us hope that 2015 will enable all communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to turn a dark page in their history.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Australia.

I would like to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his report (S/2014/777, annex) and for his continued efforts to secure lasting peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Inzko's briefing has underlined the continuing challenges facing Bosnia and Herzegovina, including from persistent political paralysis. We remain concerned by the lack of progress on a broad range of economic and governance reforms, which are essential to creating conditions of greater equity, inclusiveness and opportunity for all Bosnians. Bosnia and Herzegovina has not made concrete progress towards its own aim of Euro-Atlantic integration. That is all the more dispiriting when considered against the good progress made by some of its closest neighbours.

Australia reaffirms its strong support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We remain deeply concerned by the continued use of inflammatory and divisive rhetoric by some leaders of the Republika Srpska, including during the recent elections. The Republika Srpska President's public praise for indictees Radovan Karadzić and Ratko Mladić and the suggestion that streets and public buildings should be named after them are deeply concerning examples.

We recognize the challenges that persist in Bosnia and Herzegovina following the unprecedented flooding in May, which devastated much of the country, together with parts of Croatia and Serbia. Australia is encouraged by the inter-ethnic and regional solidarity that characterized the local and community response to the

floods. We call for the rapid adoption of comprehensive recovery strategies to facilitate reconstruction efforts.

We welcome the peaceful and orderly conduct of the 12 October general elections. It is now vital that all political actors work constructively to ensure the swift formation of government at all levels to promote economic growth and engender a sense of trust in the functioning of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Australia welcomes the fact that the overall security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains calm and stable. We acknowledge the activities of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation Althea in support of peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over the past six months, the mission also assisted with flood recovery efforts and the creation of a safe and calm environment during the elections. Australia welcomes the resolution 2183 (2014), adopted this afternoon, extending EUFOR Althea's mandate for a further 12 months, and we acknowledge, because this is a very important point, that the mandate and the presence of EUFOR-Althea has the strong support of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The disposal of excess ammunition in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains important. The displacement of mines during the floods and landslides in May has added a new dimension to the problem. Australia welcomes the work done in that regard by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in cooperation with EUFOR Althea and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

To conclude, many of the issues raised during today's debate have also been raised at previous Security Council debates on this issue. Political deadlock continues, with some leaders continuing to threaten to roll back the progress achieved since the mid-1990s. The leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina should look beyond the divisions of the past and focus on the urgent the governance and economic reforms needed to steer the country towards a peaceful and prosperous future.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Allow me to start with one remark. Today resolution 2183 (2014), extending the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force, was unfortunately not adopted unanimously. In that regard, I want to point out to all States members of the Security Council that the statement I will deliver today is approved by all three members of the presidency of my country. That means that this statement expresses the position of all three constitutive peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the highest institution in charge of foreign policy, which in our case is the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I wish to thank High Representative Mr. Valentin Inzko for his briefing. We take note of the forty-sixth report (S/2014/777, annex) to the Security Council, covering the period from 21 April to 21 October. I would like to underline some key developments during the reporting period.

First, general elections were successfully held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 12 October. My country has a complex constitutional setup, which is reflected in our electoral system. The legal framework for holding elections is regulated by our Constitution and the Election Law. The turnout was around 55 per cent. The regularity of the elections was monitored by a number of international and domestic observers. There were more than 500 international observers from 38 countries, as well as monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Furthermore, civil society was more active during the elections by forming a coalition for free and fair elections — Pod Lupom, which means "under the magnifying glass" — which brought together seven non-governmental organizations from all parts of the country. The coalition recruited and trained more than 3,000 monitors and observers. The overall conclusion of all the monitors was that the elections were conducted in an orderly manner, in a democratic and fair atmosphere and in accordance with the Election Law. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have exercised their democratic right. They have cast their votes and their choice must be respected. The political parties are now in the process of forming the new Government.

Secondly, in May my country was struck by an unprecedented natural disaster, as many of today's speakers have said. Severe rains, landslides and catastrophic floods hit one quarter of Bosnia and Herzegovina's territory. One million of our citizens were affected across the country and thousands of them were displaced from their homes. In some parts of the country entire villages were wiped out by landslides and floods. The total damage was estimated at around

€2 billion, which is equivalent to 15 per cent of our gross domestic product. The floods also moved the land mines, leaving large flooded areas insecure for the return of those who were displaced.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, led by the United Nations Development Programme, for their quick reaction and strong support during the dreadful days of the floods, as well as the damage assessments and recovery. The new United Nations delivering-as-one approach has proved to be very efficient in our case. I also wish to convey our gratitude to the European Union-led peacekeeping force, which helped, in a coordinated action with the Bosnia and Herzegovina armed forces, evacuate people from flooded areas. It also helped protect certain villages and homes and delivered food, clean water, medicine and other assistance to the affected persons and families. Our gratitude also goes to the European Union (EU), the United Nations, the World Bank and other international parties, as well as other friendly countries that came to our assistance and have pledged significant financial aid to Bosnia and Herzegovina at the international donors conference organized in Brussels on 16 July.

Full recovery from that natural disaster is going to take time. Authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with our international partners, will continue recovery efforts to alleviate the suffering of the affected population. It has been said many times that the natural disaster showed the world the best side of my country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the region. People demonstrated solidarity, humanism, hospitality and care for their neighbours.

Thirdly, I should like to turn the attention of Council members to an important issue regarding the status of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement guarantees all refugees the right to return to their pre-war homes. Although the process of the return and local integration of refugees and internally displaced persons remains a top priority for my country, the necessary conditions for sustainable return have still not been created everywhere in my country. Thus, the initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on a possible termination of refugee status would at this time most certainly have a negative impact on our refugees and our country. We therefore oppose such a termination at this time.

Fourthly, Bosnia and Herzegovina has moved from being a post-war transition country to being a contributor to international peacebuilding and security-building efforts. Bearing in mind the changing nature of conflicts throughout the world, the response of the international community must change accordingly. In line with that view, and with the current threat of foreign fighters participating in ongoing conflicts, on 6 June Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a law amending the criminal code of Bosnia and Herzegovina that prohibits and sanctions any form of the participation of our citizens in foreign paramilitary or parapolice formations by either joining, mobilizing, organizing, promoting or financing terrorist activities. Furthermore, in September my country began the prosecution of 16 individuals under that law. All relevant institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to actively participate and cooperate with our international partners in combating terrorism and countering violent extremism. We believe that such terrorism can be defeated only with a firm approach and the active engagement and cooperation of all States.

For almost 15 years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has continuously contributed to United Nations-led peacekeeping operations in Haiti, Liberia, East Timor, Cyprus, South Sudan, the Sudan and the Congo. Currently, police officers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 21 per cent of whom are women, are deployed in the United Nations peacekeeping missions in Liberia, South Sudan and Cyprus. Those police officers' contributions have been highly appreciated and respected. We strongly believe that the participation of women in conflict prevention and mediation is crucial to the maintenance and building of peace and stability. We also have a policy that women should make up at least one-third of our nominated candidates for peacekeeping missions.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore that the Euro-Atlantic integration processes remain high on the list of our foreign policy priorities. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a potential candidate for European Union membership. Six years ago, we signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. We look forward to the Agreement entering into force in the near future so that we can move to the next phase of the integration process. The new Government will face the challenges of fulfilling the conditions for applying for and achieving European Union candidate status. The new phase of integration would give an impetus to achieving a greater political stability and accelerate

the economic recovery of the country. We welcome and support the refocused, progressive engagement of the European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina to facilitate reform processes, and especially to strengthen the rule of law and good governance and to speed up other necessary reforms.

Generally speaking, good governance, a strong educational system and a vibrant civil society are keys to promoting a culture of dialogue and tolerance. In that sense, in July the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina signed on to the United Nations project Dialogue for the future: promoting coexistence and diversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project, launched jointly by the United Nations and our presidency, will serve to promote peacebuilding processes by providing a space and platform for citizens, civil society representatives and local leaders to work jointly on promoting civic and intercultural dialogue and trust building.

Finally, my country will continue to make efforts to implement positive reforms with the aim of securing stability, progress and prosperity for all our citizens.

The President: I now give the floor to the Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, like other speakers, I would like to welcome my friend High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Council and to reassure him of our continued support.

We are following developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina with keen interest. We look forward to a new spirit of engagement after the recent elections. I must be frank in saying that a number of challenges remain and that progress in political and economic reforms has been too weak for too long. More needs to be done to ensure that a united, stable, viable, multi-ethnic and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina can irreversibly move forward towards the European Union. Fostering good-neighbourly relations with all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's neighbours and other countries of the region is of vital importance in that regard.

In that respect, a clear European Union perspective is important. I would like to reiterate that today, in particular after what we heard earlier. It is a strong and unifying factor that is broadly shared among Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens and political forces, irrespective of their ethnic or religious background. Ambassador Čolaković underlined in her statement the importance of that perspective for her country.

That perspective motivates reforms and provides key incentives to achieving progress in the areas of concern, as also repeatedly called for by the Council. The European Union perspective is also part of the broader international engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. We therefore encourage Council members to inspire Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leadership to overcome internal divisions, ensure functionality at all state levels and to undertake without delay the reforms necessary to moving the country forward on its European Union path.

On 12 October, Bosnia and Herzegovina held presidential and general elections. We note the good conduct of those elections. Now it is of utmost importance that the country's institutions and Governments at various levels be established as early as possible and that they quickly begin their work addressing the country's numerous challenges. As a matter of particular priority, the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to focus on the social and economic agenda. The urgency in that regard was further increased in the aftermath to the devastating floods that struck Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries of the region this year.

As also shown by the sudden and violent public protests earlier in 2014, a deteriorating socioeconomic situation has the potential to undermine efforts in other areas of engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is why we believe that the implementation of measures outlined in the Compact For Growth and Jobs initiative of the European Union, in close cooperation with international financial institutions and partners, would be a crucial step forward in that regard.

This brings me to another point. A gradual and far-reaching improvement in the functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions needs to move to the centre of attention of the country's political leadership. A move away from the current stalemate is a condition sine qua non for ensuring the long-term stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Functionality is also key to ensuring the compatibility of the country's institutional set-up with the requirements of the European Union.

The EU High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, together with Commissioner for European Neighbourhood, Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn, in close collaboration with European Union member Statea, will continue their broad and deep engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We shall also work closely with international partners in those endeavours. The European Union will seek real dedication to reforms from the newly elected political leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since September 2011, the European Union has strengthened its political presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to facilitate progress towards European integration. The single European Union presence on the ground in the person of the EU Special Representative — who is at the same time the Head of our delegation there — is fully engaged in supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in all EU related matters. The EU increased its regional presence in 2012, opening new offices in Mostar and Brcko and a larger office in Banja Luka. The Head of Delegation/European Union Special Representative is also offering the European Union Force Commander political guidance on military issues with a local political dimension, in particular concerning sensitive operations and relations with local authorities and with the local media.

The European Union also continues to accompany Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in the security field. Despite the social protests in February 2014, the overall security situation has remained calm and stable; yet stability has not been entrenched. Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities have so far proven capable of dealing with threats to public order and to a safe and secure environment. The European Union will therefore maintain the EU-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation Althea, with a focus on capacity-building and training. However, EUFOR Althea will retain an executive military role to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to maintain a safe and secure environment under a United Nations mandate. It will thereby remain able to contribute to the deterrence capacity of the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities if the situation so requires.

In the context of the overall European Union strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, we look forward to continuing the discussion with the international community, in the appropriate forum, on the reconfiguration of the international presence. We call on the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet the outstanding objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

The EU reiterates its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country. We remain ready to once again give the necessary impulse to restart the reform process in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to provide the necessary assistance to support progress towards Bosnia and Herzegovina's European integration. In that context, the European Union, as the direct neighbour of Bosnia and Herzegovina, presents great opportunities for the country and all its citizens. That approach will take the country forward on its reform agenda towards stability and development on its path to the European Union.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): Before proceeding with my statement, I would like to underline how privileged I am to deliver my statement today, 11 November, a date that continues to stand out as a beacon of hope and reconciliation all over the world. In paying respect to those who have laid down their lives for peace and liberty before and after that momentous day, let me reaffirm my country's commitment to lasting peace and reconciliation in our region and beyond.

At the outset, I would like to welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to thank him for his report to the Council (S/2014/777, annex).

Serbia supports the territorial integrity and constitutional arrangements of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as provided for by the Dayton Peace Agreement, and considers the country one of its key partners in the region. Accordingly, my country accepts every decision taken by the two entities and three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is committed to promoting good-neighbourly cooperation on the basis of the closest possible relations with the central Government and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We continue to deepen and enrich the special relations that we have with Republika Srpska.

Serbia shares the assessment, prevalent both within and without Bosnia and Herzegovina, that the general elections of October were fair and democratic and that their results were accepted by all political actors. We

also continue to believe that the right way forward is the honouring by the post-election majority of the political will expressed at the elections. The political dialogue between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is extensive and wide-ranging. That is evinced very tellingly by the fact that Sarajevo was the first visit destination of Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić after his electoral victory, as well as by the joint donor conference, held in Brussels on 16 July, to raise funds to relieve the consequences of the catastrophic floods that hit both Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina last spring.

The visit of Mr. Zlatko Lagumdžija, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to Belgrade in August, and his meetings with the highest ranking officials of Serbia were also assessed as an important contribution to the strengthening of the stability of the region and the promotion of economic relations between the two countries. On that occasion, the two sides expressed their interest in revitalizing the infrastructure connecting Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and intensifying the work on energy generation projects, especially on the Drina River.

The two countries are in agreement on the need to hold a joint meeting of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The meeting is now expected to take place upon the formation of a new Council. In addition, the return visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina of Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, will take place some time soon.

Last but not least, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on joint ventures in third-country markets in Belgrade last September, as a reflection of their excellent overall relations.

Also, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to address in good faith and mutual interest all outstanding issues, which are significantly reduced in number now, in direct contacts and talks without intermediaries. They include demarcation, refugees and missing persons, and the process of succession.

I would like to reiterate that, as the country with the largest number of refugees in the region, Serbia shares the concern of High Representative Inzko with respect to the recommendation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to lift the refugee status on refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. We consider that the recommendation is premature, has a negative effect on the protection of refugees and is detrimental to the implementation of the regional housing programme and the process of reconciliation. Serbia calls for the adoption of lasting, just and sustainable solutions that will address the needs and respect the rights of the long-displaced vulnerable population.

Finally, I would like to point out that Serbia is a staunch supporter of Bosnia and Herzegovina's European integration. To that end, we have been promoting the integration process, including through a number of institutions, initiatives and acts, such as the Commission on the Implementation of the Action Plan of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of European Integration, exchange of experiences in the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria and readiness for coordination on the road towards the European Union, making it possible for the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to draw insight from the part of Serbia's application relating to foreign affairs and the fulfilment of other technical membership conditions fulfilled by my country. We cooperate with Bosnia and Herzegovina in the cross-border cooperation programmes under aegis of the European Union's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): I would like to join other speakers in welcoming High Representative Valentin Inzko and expressing our gratitude for his briefing and the report (S/2014/777, annex). I would also like to express our appreciation for the personal efforts he has been making in carrying out his difficult and important mandate.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union, and I would like to add several remarks in my national capacity.

I would like to start by quoting Croatian President Ivo Josipović, who, as the first President of Croatia ever invited to speak before the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, told the Assembly on 14 April 2010: "Croatia is not merely a neighbour of

Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it is also its sincere friend, partner and ally". Those words are as relevant today as they were more than four years ago.

Croatia, sharing a 1,000-kilometre-long land border with our neighbour, considers the territorial integrity, stability, functionality and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina to be of paramount importance for that country, and in Croatia's national interest as well. It is also a principal matter of regional and European peace and prosperity.

We fully support the European and Euro-Atlantic orientation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and offer our partnership in achieving that goal. Who else but its neighbours would know best the importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration into the European Union, in particular its neighbour that not long ago went through the same long and highly demanding accession process?

Croatia firmly believes that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a future as a member of Euro-Atlantic community as a modern European State with a developed democracy and viable competitive economy. We shall spare no effort to help and assist Bosnia and Herzegovina throughout that process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a State with a particular political system, rooted in the Dayton Peace Agreement. Its system is primarily based on ethnic representation, which rests in turn on genuine equality among the three constitutive peoples. That equality is a prerequisite for the stability and functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a key to achieving a successful ethnicity-citizen balance.

Croatia is mindful of the legitimate needs and rights of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are the smallest but nevertheless equally important constitutive people in the country. We shall certainly keep extending our support to them.

The protests that took place earlier this year in Bosnia and Herzegovina were a telling expression of citizens' frustration with the dysfunction of the system and the deteriorating socioeconomic situation in the country. Those events were a direct consequence of the lack of much-needed reforms that could ensure stability and prosperity. Otherwise, the country might face further socioeconomic tensions and destabilization along ethnic lines. We therefore share the High Representative's concern and condemnation of divisive and secessionist rhetoric coming from Republika Srpska. The calls for a referendum on secession and other statements challenging the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country are completely unacceptable.

As highlighted in the report, the two most significant developments in the reporting period were the floods that hit Bosnia and Herzegovina hard in May and the general elections in October.

In our view, the general elections held on 12 October were fair and inclusive. It is now of crucial importance that all levels of Government be formed without delay and that the challenges, in particular the economic and social issues, be swiftly addressed.

In May, Bosnia and Herzegovina was hit by catastrophic floods. We commend the immediate acts of solidarity extended to the flooded areas and the huge contributions that have been made from the region, Europe and beyond. Croatia was among the first to respond, providing assistance in goods, personnel and money. The work to alleviate the dire consequences of the floods is not finished yet, and Bosnia and Herzegovina needs the international support to remain ongoing.

We believe that in order to achieve our common goal — a stable, functioning and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina — a realistic strategy is neede that takes into account the country's specific issues and conditions. The clear prospect of membership in the European Union (EU) is by far the best stability and security framework within which Bosnia and Herzegovina can achieve steady progress. The EU accession process serves as the best blueprint for State-building reforms, strengthened administrative capacities and good governance.

We should all continue to keep our focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina and further strengthen our assistance and good advice after the new Government is formed. However, the lack of collective political will on the part of the political leaders to address the reforms necessary for progress on the EU path has caused a standstill in the European integration process. It is imperative that we find a way to overcome the gridlock in Bosnia and Herzegovina's European integration process so that the Stabilization and Association Agreement can enter into force and open the way for the country's EU candidate status.

With that in mind, Croatia has put forward a proposal for a tailor-made approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina's

EU integration process. That does not mean minimizing the criteria, but rather helping the country to meet all of them through keeping its EU integration process tangible and feasible. In that respect, the preconditions for starting an EU-oriented process become an integral part of the integration process, which carries with it a transformative power that gradually increases the stability and functionality of the State.

To that effect, we are in line with the recent initiative put forward by the Foreign Ministers of Germany and United Kingdom. We fully support their approach for giving the necessary impulse to restarting the reform process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We deem it especially important that the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina make long-term, irrevocable written commitments to implementing the necessary reforms with the objective of making Bosnia and Herzegovina ready for the EU accession process. Those commitments should become part of the new Government's programme and approved by Bosnia and Herzegovina's Parliament.

Croatia also believes that the intensification of the NATO integration process is of great importance for the stability and security of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are hopeful that new Government will invest additional efforts in order to fulfil the necessary conditions for the activation of the NATO membership action plan.

Croatia continues to support the executive mandate of Operation Althea of the Eureopean Union-led peacekeeping force. Operation Althea is a vital mechanism for the prevention of potential instability in the situation, which may, as we have already witnessed, easily and rapidly slide into violence. It is also an important tool in security capacity-building and training.

We regret that the additional protocol to the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina, legally required after Croatia's accession to the EU, has not yet been concluded. We particularly regret the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not accept the negotiating principle on the basis of traditional trade. We therefore urge the newly elected political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to come to a viable and sustainable agreement on this matter.

Finally, allow me to say that Bosnia and Herzegovina calls for our attention and unquestionably deserves it. It is worth reminding ourselves how important the country is for Europe. I would therefore like to conclude by reiterating Croatia's readiness to continue to cooperate closely with our neighbour on all issues and to provide Bosnia and Herzegovina with strong and continuous political, technical and other support required in the process of building a better future.

The President: There are no further names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.