



# Security Council

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## **Letter dated 6 May 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina” convened on Tuesday, 4 May 2021. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia as well as by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

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

*(Signed)* **Zhang Jun**  
President of the Security Council



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

It is my sincere honour to address this distinguished body once again. Having in mind that this may very well be my last address as High Representative before the Security Council, I regret that we are unable to meet in person due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which continues to wreak havoc in much of the world. As always, I hope all of you and your respective countries and citizens are doing well.

I extend my sincere condolences to the representative from India for the situation your country currently faces. With vaccines slowly becoming more widely available, I hope that there is some light at the end of the tunnel for you, and for all of us. I am pleased to inform you that today, a few hours ago, European Commission Enlargement Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi and Austrian Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Schallenberg were in Sarajevo to deliver vaccines. Austria was instrumental in the logistic legwork, which made this delivery possible today.

When I arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2009, the international community was entering a new phase of engagement, in which it emphasized local ownership over international intervention. Local ownership is a great ideal, but with ownership comes responsibility, and the level of discourse today in Bosnia and Herzegovina could politely be described as irresponsible. More bluntly, it is reckless and dangerous.

Last year, 2020, was a year of hope and reflection for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country marked 25 years of peace as a result of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, initialled on 19 November 1995 in Dayton, Ohio, and signed on 14 December 1995 in Paris. It was a time for reflection on the achievements, as well as the shortcomings, of the ensuing two and a half decades, while also looking towards the future.

This is reflected in the joint statement of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the initialling of the Agreement, which read, in part,

“Today is a unique opportunity to send a message to rightly underline the importance of strengthening trust, peace and mutual respect among all peoples and citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina, all its parts, entities, Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, cantons, cities and municipalities.”

On that occasion, best wishes were also delivered to Bosnia and Herzegovina from former United States President Clinton, the Presidents of Austria and Slovenia, the Secretary General, the Prime Minister of Spain, the Foreign Ministers of Germany and France and a large number of dignitaries.

As laid out in my report (see S/2021/409), as part of a long-standing policy of challenging the fundamentals of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the decisions and authority of the High Representative, with the aim of rolling back reforms and reclaiming competencies from the State, the Republika Srpska authorities — led by Milorad Dodik — adopted a set of concrete conclusions in this regard in March. As I reported, these conclusions envisage discussions among domestic political actors on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, leaving open the option for so-called “peaceful dissolution” of the country.

There is no real need to explain the destructive long-term policy of the current Republika Srpska authorities, as it was explained to this very body by Mr. Dodik

in the Arria Formula meeting held last year in November. I believe it was clear to everyone what kind of irrational, destructive policy and mindset we are dealing with. You will recall, he called me a “monster” and the late Lord Ashdown “a criminal.”

Only yesterday, Mr. Dodik was again in the media, claiming he recently told a foreign diplomat that peaceful dissolution is the only option that is bound to happen anyway, and that the diplomat had “nothing against it.” If you or I or anyone else stood up and said we want to split up our country, we would be called traitors, secessionists or seditionists, and possibly arrested. To put in blunt terms: it is unthinkable in our countries that the President would want to destroy the very country of which he is President.

Furthermore, Mr. Dodik’s party, the Union of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), recently posted several videos as part of an online campaign promoting “peaceful dissolution,” which will also run as advertisements to YouTube viewers in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In April, leaders of the Republika Srpska ruling coalition parties met at a mountain resort near Banja Luka, where Mr. Dodik announced that the Republika Srpska would form teams for negotiating with the Federation on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that the Republika Srpska National Assembly would adopt a platform as the basis for negotiations in this regard. The draft platform makes it clear that, if the direction and outcome of such discussions are not to the Republika Srpska authorities’ liking, the Republika Srpska “reserves the right to finally decide on its future status”.

As to be expected, these developments have stirred up the Federation-based parties, particularly the Bosniak parties, most of which dismissed the possibility of a “peaceful dissolution” of Bosnia and Herzegovina and some of which predicted a war in case the Republika Srpska attempted to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As High Representative, I want to be clear: Dayton does not give the right to entities to secede. So, once again, the political atmosphere is poisoned and progress on reforms is side-lined. And it is extremely unfortunate that the Republika Srpska authorities have chosen this moment, when the entire country is still in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is also the moment when the Republika Srpska authorities had to borrow €300 million via a bond sale on the London Stock Exchange to cover its budget deficit, because they would not accept the easy money and reforms proposed by the International Monetary Fund.

During my mandate as High Representative, we have seen the goalposts move — shifts in the red line of what the international community is willing to accept. We have seen a shift from rhetoric to action challenging the State competences, institutions and decisions, and we are now also witnessing a shift from rhetoric to action challenging the State sovereignty and territorial integrity, and with this the peace implementation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

To be clear, there is now a concerted effort to formalize and implement the conclusions adopted by the Republika Srpska National Assembly. At best, the goal is to roll back the many reform achievements of the past 25 years, which threatens the State, its competences, its institutions and their ability to take and enforce decisions. That would impact ongoing reforms, including those covered by the 14 priorities of the European Union (EU), many of which build on reforms brought about by the High Representative’s interventions. At worst, it is a set-up, with ultimatums that the political leaders of Republika Srpska know are impossible to achieve. The Republika Srpska leadership would then use that to claim that the Republika Srpska is forced to unilaterally decide on its future status, which would mean secession.

Let us also be clear. Even if it is a best-case scenario, the aim is a perpetually dysfunctional Bosnia and Herzegovina, which we already see in the near-paralysis of its highest institutions, including the Presidency, the Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, not to mention in the Federation, which the Independent Union of Social Democrats' partner, the Croat Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ Bosnia and Herzegovina), has succeeded in grinding to a halt. That will have negative consequences for the Western Balkans region and the rest of Europe, as a debilitated Bosnia and Herzegovina is not in a position to effectively deal with the challenges of organized crime, corruption, migration, climate change, et cetera.

If such negative trends continue, the question for the international community will soon be how long that kind of destructive behaviour can be tolerated and how long Mr. Dodik and his allies in the Republika Srpska and elsewhere can be regarded as partners.

On the other hand, we have seen movement around the electoral reform process, which has been at a stalemate for years. It could be an opportunity to tackle a key long-standing set of rights-based reforms, including removing the discrimination identified in rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, while also improving the transparency of the election process.

Unfortunately, there is fear and mistrust among citizens and civil society that the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina would seek to appease the demands of the HDZ Bosnia and Herzegovina to further ethnicize the electoral system by redefining electoral constituencies in the Federation on the basis of ethno-territorial division or the ethnic declaration of voters. That concept of ethno-democracy would certainly conflict not only with the implementation of the *Sejdić and Finci* group of cases, but also with the specific goals of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including the overall aim of the Agreement to re-establish the multi-ethnic society that existed prior to the war.

I must reiterate that we must not allow that process to lead to further ethnic or territorial divisions. I am fully convinced that a possible third electoral unit — real or virtual, temporary or permanent — is considered by the HDZ Bosnia and Herzegovina as just another step towards the third entity. In a best-case scenario, a third electoral unit would cement the political dynamic in the Federation in a way that the HDZ Bosnia and Herzegovina leaders would feel absolutely no impetus to cooperate with the Bosniaks. For easier understanding, I will draw a parallel with the Republika Srpska, which is also one electoral unit. We have seen how its positions have radicalized over time when there is no incentive to reach out to other ethnic groups.

Apart from the implementation of the *Sejdić and Finci* decision and related ones, the priority should be the implementation of the recommendations of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Group of States against Corruption, which would not only eradicate discrimination but also increase transparency and prevent electoral fraud.

When I last addressed the Security Council in November (S/2020/1103, annex I), I repeated my call on the Republika Srpska authorities to remove the plaque dedicated to convicted war criminal Radovan Karadžić from the student dormitory in Pale. I am pleased to report that the plaque was officially taken down in December. On 27 January, I addressed a letter to the Speaker of the Republika Srpska National Assembly (RSNA), asking it to rescind within three months decorations awarded in 2016 to three convicted war criminals, among them Radovan Karadžić. The three months passed in April, and I have received no formal response, nor have the decorations been rescinded. The RSNA was to discuss the issue on 28 April but

postponed it. We will see what happens, but for now I am informing the Council that the situation has not been rectified.

The behaviour of political leaders most unfortunately encourages similar behaviour among the public. In addition to some examples mentioned in my report, only in the past few weeks a huge mural of convicted war criminal Ratko Mladić appeared in the Republika Srpska town of Foča, which is well known as a place where unspeakable war crimes occurred.

In the absence of more responsible behaviour, first and foremost on the part of political leaders, that again points to the need for the criminalization of the glorification of war criminals, as well as genocide denial. I must note my disappointment that a few such efforts in that regard before the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament failed. As a result, I am increasingly called upon by various groups of citizens to impose such legislation. In any case, here I would again recall the European Commission opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership application, which unequivocally states, "Revisionism and genocide denial contradict the most fundamental European values".

There are some areas where I remain hopeful, such as the case of Mostar. After 12 years, the city of Mostar finally held local elections, ultimately electing a new mayor, Mr. Mario Kordić, whom I have met, and I am impressed by his energy and enthusiasm. So far, there seems to be a great amount of goodwill in the new Mostar City Council, and I am confident that it will make an honest effort to address the many issues that have accumulated over all the years without a City Council. But, at the same time, mentioning Mostar as a success is an indication of how desperate for any success we have become. Mostar is, in fact, a work in progress.

I should note as well that the Sarajevo City Council also recently elected a new mayor, a young and enthusiastic woman, Benjamina Karić, whom I recently met and who is from a multicultural family. Citizens in Banja Luka directly elected a new mayor, a member of the Republika Srpska opposition, Draško Stanivuković, only 27 years old, who so far has taken a transparent approach to his work.

The date 7 December 2020 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the so-called Warsaw genuflection, where, in the Second World War, thousands of Jews lost their lives under their German oppressors. After laying the wreath, Chancellor Brandt fell to his knees before the memorial. It was an historical and astonishing act of atonement.

That is what leadership looks like and what is sorely needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. In that context, I would like to call on the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency to live up to its statement from the twenty-fifth anniversary of the General Framework Agreement for Peace and in 2021 to organize and participate in a joint commemoration for all victims of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I believe that such an act would be healing for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, even among the Presidency members themselves.

In my previous address in November, I urged the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement the third national action plan for resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which runs until 2022. I would particularly like to emphasize the important role of women in trust-building and political leadership. There have been a few steps forward, such as the efforts of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Defence to increase the role of women in peacekeeping missions. However, despite being on the front lines of the COVID-19 response, women disproportionately suffered the consequences of the ensuing economic crisis. Women were often the first to be laid off and the authorities cut social protection in emergency budgets. During the pandemic, we also saw a 30 per cent increase in the number of women seeking help after violence.

I would like to note the many Bosnian women refugees who have ascended to prominent political office outside the country, including Austrian Minister of Justice Alma Zadić, born in Tuzla; the Right Honourable Baroness Arminka Helić in the United Kingdom House of Lords, born in Gračanica; Hannah Sumeja Atić, member of the Norwegian Prime Minister's Cabinet, born in Bugojno; former Swedish Minister of Higher and Secondary Education Aida Hadzialic, born in Foča; and Mayor of Kalmar, Sweden, Dzenita Abaza, also born in Foča.

That affirms that Bosnia and Herzegovina's greatest asset is its human potential but, due to the unstable situation, that asset is growing as an export. The women whom I mentioned fled the country in a time of war. Young, educated people are now leaving the country in search of opportunities elsewhere, not because of the economy, but because of nepotism and corruption in the health-care sector, a general lack of the rule of law and, increasingly, political instability.

We, as the international community, must strive to help Bosnia and Herzegovina conserve its greatest assets and resources. That can be achieved only by preserving it as a stable, peaceful and prosperous State that functions and provides for the needs and best interests of all of its peoples, fully integrated with the European Union and other Euro-Atlantic structures. The political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina must finally learn to really lead or get out of the way.

In conclusion, it is possible that this is my last address to the Security Council as High Representative. I therefore want to use the opportunity to reflect on some of the lessons of the past 12 years.

Living and working in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been one of the great pleasures of my life. By and large, the people are among the nicest and most caring I have ever met. Neighbours look after neighbours. It is certainly not the case that people cannot live together, but the politicians spend too much time emphasizing what divides them rather than what unites them. After years of unchecked divisive rhetoric, we need to see politicians who can truly unite and lead.

Today I would have hoped that I could declare the job completed. Unfortunately, and much to my regret, today's Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country with largely ineffective governance structures, mired by continuous political deadlocks, where corruption is widespread and the rule of law is weak. At a time when the political situation is destabilized by calls for the dissolution of the State and Bosnia and Herzegovina is still a long way from lasting political stability, the engagement of the international community remains crucial.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains de facto a frozen conflict, where political leaders continue to pursue wartime goals and generate divisive narratives and nationalistic political agendas. The multi-ethnic and diverse society that existed prior to the conflict has all but disappeared, while it is becoming more difficult to defend the preservation of multi-ethnic spaces and resist the creation of mono-ethnic ones. Hate speech, the glorification of war criminals and revisionism or outright genocide denial, despite the verdicts of international judicial bodies, remain very common in the political discourse.

The refusal to accept the authority of the State and to comply with the rule of law, defying or ignoring the Bosnia and Herzegovina legal and constitutional framework and not cooperating with, or actively undermining, State-level judicial and law enforcement agencies and the defiance of the authority and decisions of High Representatives are some examples of today's most immediate challenges. I have consistently alerted the international community of the dangers of allowing that course of action to continue unchecked in my previous reports to the Council.

As I said at the outset, when I arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina as High Representative in 2009, the mantra was “local ownership”. With only a very few exceptions quite early on, we have tried that, and it is not working. Here we are a dozen years later talking about peaceful dissolution. Bosnia and Herzegovina should be firmly on the EU path, but today one of its political leaders is openly advocating dividing the country, disparaging and mocking the EU in the process.

We have had a period of robust interventionism — which has garnered some criticism, but, let us be honest, helped to propel Bosnia and Herzegovina a long way on its path — and a longer period of local ownership, during which a step forward has often been followed by two steps back. Perhaps it is time to consider a different approach, somewhere in the middle. In any case, the international community needs to take a decisive stand to stop such centrifugal tendencies, which are taking the country further into a downward spiral. That could have political and security implications not only for the country but also for the region and the rest of Europe.

Until there is a genuine, demonstrated commitment to peace and stability and the durable stability and inviolability of Bosnia and Herzegovina are ensured, the international community must retain all the instruments at its disposal to address any potential threat, including the executive powers of the High Representative, the maintenance of international judges in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court, the international mechanisms in Brčko district and the international military presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Personally, I have the impression that we are very far from a situation that would allow changes to the post-Dayton arrangement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Instead of rushing to a decision, we should come to terms with the fact that peace stabilization takes time. That was also the opinion of Karel Schwarzenberg, Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, the EU presidency country in 2009, who supported my candidacy as High Representative and said to me: “We must have a long-term approach on Bosnia Herzegovina.” We should also acknowledge that the pace of progress has slowed because we decided to change our robust approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina too quickly.

Unfortunately, we have to be honest with ourselves that the growing gaps in the wider international community do not help the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region to improve. Therefore, I again appeal to the international community to remain united and decisive and to work together on offering solutions and solving problems. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a unique country, which calls for a unique approach.

I am increasingly inclined to believe that the current post-war political elite, mostly alienated from reality, is neither ready nor equipped to deal with contemporary challenges and address the real needs of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I tend to believe that they are not our genuine partners in moving the country forward. We therefore need to find way to deal with them in a firmer way and, at the same time, move past them, also by finding new partners.

The good news is that there are progressive forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina with whom we can partner that want to normalize their country. History shows that we can be incredibly successful. Let us not forget that in 2005 Bosnia and Herzegovina was the poster boy for post-conflict resolution — a country delivering structural reforms and advancing towards constitutional change. If we were able to forge a single army from three armies that fought each other a decade earlier, we can certainly do what remains to be done.

But I must be blunt. Both the international community and progressive actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina are making a fundamental mistake if they assume that

things will somehow work out, because time is working in our favour. This is a fundamental mistake as long as the forces of disintegration are stronger than those of reintegration. For time to be on our side, we must get back to a dynamic of reform and reintegration.

I would like to thank you for your cooperation and attention for all these years.

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

I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing. I would like to make the following three points.

First, China welcomes the continued stability of the overall situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina has reiterated its commitment to the agreement. Local elections have been held smoothly as scheduled, and the reform of the Brčko district progressing steadily. These are all positive developments worthy of our recognition. At the same time, nation-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina still faces many challenges. We encourage all parties to set store by the interests of the country and its people, strengthen dialogue and consultation, enhance mutual trust, promote ethnic harmony, resolve disputes and reconcile differences and promote solutions to the outstanding issues in nation-building.

Secondly, China hopes that all ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina will work together to cope with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which is yet to be brought under effective control. We encourage all parties to stay united and coordinated to protect the safety and health of people of all ethnicities and seize the opportunity to enhance mutual trust and reconciliation and achieve harmonious coexistence. The international community should scale up support for Bosnia and Herzegovina in fighting the pandemic. China has donated protective equipment and test kits and organized several groups of medical experts to share experiences and practices with their Bosnia and Herzegovina counterparts. Recently, we have provided COVID-19 vaccines made in China.

Thirdly, China calls on the international community to take a fair and balanced approach on the Bosnia and Herzegovina issue. We encourage the High Representative to maintain constructive dialogue and cooperation with all Bosnian parties. The appointment of the High Representative should be handled in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement and past practices.

Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement 25 years ago, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has undergone great changes. The international community should examine, in the light of the developments on the ground, ways to render concrete support to Bosnia and Herzegovina in implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement to better accommodate the needs of its people. China respects the sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and believes that its people have the ability and the wisdom to address their own issues. China will continue to work with all countries to support the national reconciliation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina and safeguard peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans.

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

I would like to thank you, High Representative Valentin Inzko, for your comprehensive briefing today. We really commend your work, in particular, as you are tackling close to 100 per cent of your tasks although your team's size and budget have substantially decreased over the years. We fully support a robust and effective Office of High Representative, which is necessary in order to fulfil its mandated responsibilities and mitigate risks to stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Inzko, your analysis of the situation in the country in your latest regular report to the Secretary-General (see S/2021/409) is excellent, and we encourage you to also include the elements of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in future reporting.

Estonia strongly supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity and is certain that Bosnia and Herzegovina's future is adjoined with the Euro-Atlantic path, in line with the legitimate aspiration of its citizens. We welcome the local elections held in the city of Mostar on 20 December last year for the first time since 2008, and the adoption of the revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy, which both represent important steps forward for the country on its European Union (EU) integration path.

We call on the presidency leaders to seize the opportunity of 2021 as non-electoral year to show concrete progress on the implementation of the rest of the key priorities of the European Commission's opinion, in particular the electoral and constitutional reform to ensure the equality and non-discrimination of citizens and advancing the rule of law. We also encourage them to promote youth employment and education, as well as gender equality, and to implement the women and peace and security agenda in an inclusive manner.

We reiterate our full support to the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea) and its mandate, as the mission is a strong contributor to the country's efforts in maintaining a safe and secure environment, which is particularly crucial in the current complicated political climate in the country.

The rise of nationalistic and divisive rhetoric in Bosnia and Herzegovina is deeply concerning. Spreading provocative rhetoric, denying war crimes, glorifying convicted war criminals and downplaying the Srebrenica genocide in any way is unacceptable.

We urge the political parties in the country to engage in dialogue and foster an environment conducive to unity, consensus and constructive engagement in the interest of the citizens. Republika Srpska should stop advocating secession and refrain from any actions or policies that could destabilize the country. It is high time to put aside differences, focus on easing political tensions and promoting reconciliation, and concentrate on forming the Government in the Federation.

A functioning Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court is of vital strategic importance for the country, and we fully support its international judges. All political parties in the country have to implement important judicial decisions of the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights.

As we have learned from the High Representative's latest report, the coronavirus disease pandemic has seriously disrupted Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy. Estonia stands in strong support of the EU's solidarity with the Western Balkans and its addressing the immediate health needs, as well as the long-term social and economic impact resulting from the pandemic. We commend the work

and support of all others, such as the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), who have provided assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina during the pandemic.

We also commend UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO for implementing the Dialogue for the Future project, which seeks to enhance the local dialogue platforms — bringing together local leaders, as well as civil society, youth, religious leaders and women’s organizations.

To move forward, all political leaders of the country should deliver concrete results and implement fundamental reforms. We call on the leaders to work in solidarity and unity.

**Annex IV****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst Estival**

[Original: French]

I, too, wish China every success in its presidency of the Security Council in May and congratulate Viet Nam on its successful presidency last month.

I thank the High Representative, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing and commend his tireless commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina over the past 12 years. I also welcome the presence here today of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and the European Union.

At a time when some people in Bosnia-Herzegovina are choosing to play the card of division and the exacerbation of tensions, France, as a signatory to the Dayton Agreement, strongly reaffirms its unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and calls on all signatories to these agreements to continue to uphold them. Divisive, nationalistic and secessionist rhetoric, or rhetoric that raises the possibility of war, is not acceptable.

France calls on the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to focus on the real challenges facing the country. There are many: the fight against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which the European Union has supported, the adoption and implementation of the reforms necessary for its development, and its rapprochement with Europe.

We welcome some recent achievements, such as the holding of local elections in 2020, in particular in Mostar for the first time since 2008, as has been mentioned several times, and we call on the newly elected municipal authorities to undertake concrete, inclusive local actions for the benefit of all their citizens. However, much more needs to be done to implement the 14 key priorities of the European Commission's opinion. The year 2021, with no electoral deadline, is an opportunity to make progress in implementing those reforms. We call for progress to be made in the effective functioning of democratic institutions, namely, at the central State level, and in strengthening the rule of law, especially with regard to the independence of the judiciary and the fight against corruption. Electoral reform must be implemented in accordance with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and the recommendations of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Venice Commission.

The full and effective participation of women in political life must also be a priority. We also continue to call for the formation of Governments in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in all the cantons that still do not have one, and for the normal functioning of the country's institutions.

As we commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide on 11 July 2020, France reaffirms its strongest condemnation of the glorification of war criminals convicted by the courts and the denial of genocide, which are incompatible with the values of the European Union. The national and international justice systems have done a remarkable job of prosecuting and convicting those responsible for the atrocities committed during the conflict of the 1990s and their decisions must be respected. The victims of sexual violence must be recognized. France reaffirms the importance of justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition for those crimes. Transitional justice and reconciliation processes remain the only solid basis for the future of the country.

Given the tense political situation and, in particular, the resurgence of rhetoric that challenges the existence of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a State, we reaffirm our

conviction that both the Office of the High Representative and the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina Operation Althea, to which France has recommitted itself, must be maintained. We call on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to overcome their divisions and to redouble their efforts to implement the reforms recommended by the European Union, as well as the 5+2 agenda, which is a condition for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

Lastly, I would like to reaffirm France's full support for the European prospects of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkan countries more broadly. For that to happen, greater reform efforts and a firm rejection of divisive rhetoric are more necessary than ever.

**Annex V****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Ravindra Raguttahalli**

Let me begin by extending our best wishes to the Chinese delegation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and I wish it all success. I would like to thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his useful briefing and for this comprehensive and detailed report (see S/2021/409).

The Dayton Peace Agreement remains the cornerstone for building enduring peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To this day, Dayton continues to define the framework to find solutions related to inter-ethnic conflict settlement through dialogue of the parties on the basis of equality and mutual respect, compromise and consensus.

The Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as an ad-hoc international institution mechanism, has been overseeing the implementation of the civilian aspects of the agreement. Towards this end, we also recognize the progress made in the last two and half decades and the important role played by the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR-Althea, and the contribution of the international community. These efforts have brought about peace and allowed the sustenance of a complex political governance structure. Of late, there have been some visible frictions though, including avoidable rhetoric and actions, which have hampered progress in the implementation of the agreement.

We believe it is incumbent on the Office of the High Representative to continue to work with all parties objectively to build trust to overcome the impediments. The Office of the High Representative is an ad-hoc mechanism and expeditious implementation of the 5+2 agenda should continue to remain the top priority. We are of the view that the issue of Office of the High Representative needs to be resolved through consensus.

The reporting period has witnessed some positive developments, despite the negative impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic. The tripartite presidency has issued a joint statement marking the twenty-fifth anniversary expressing commitment to respect the provisions of the agreement and Constitution. The elections to the assembly in Brčko district and local assemblies in cities and municipalities in both the Federation and Republic of Srpska have taken place. This is a welcome trend reflecting people's faith in democracy. The Council of Ministers, as mentioned by the High Representative, has met regularly and the presidency has also taken decisions within its competencies. At the same time, as mentioned in the report of Office of the High Representative, several areas remain where progress has been little or less than satisfactory, including bringing an end to ethnic-based discrimination and improving coordination among the State and entity-level institutions.

The increasing number of illegal migrants transiting Bosnia and Herzegovina is a matter of serious concern, given its impact on internal security and the potential of radicalization. India stands ready to extend support in capacity-building to address this challenge.

We pay homage to those who lost their lives during the 1990s. Having witnessed genocide in our own neighbourhood 50 years ago, we are convinced that the attempts to seek justice for those who were massacred or went missing must actively continue. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of the Revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy.

While there has not been much progress on implementing 5+2 agenda, we should not lose sight of positive developments, such as elections to the assembly in

Brčko district. Bosnia and Herzegovina has come a long way in building a multi-ethnic, multilingual, multicultural and multireligious country. The problems that the country is facing are typical and bound to be encountered on the path of nation-building, especially when inhabited by people of different faiths, ethnicities and languages. We hope the Bosnian parties will continue their engagement in a spirit of compromise and maturity to address all outstanding issues.

**Annex VI****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

Like others, I want to wish you well, Sir, at the beginning of your presidency and again to thank our Vietnamese colleagues for the excellent month we have just concluded.

This is the first time, as a new member, that Ireland has had an opportunity to address the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina in discussion, so I want to begin by underlining our strong support for a single, sovereign, united and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina. I also want to express our support for the Office of the High Representative and the European Union-led Operation Althea, in which Ireland is proud to participate.

I would like to thank the High Representative, Mr. Inzko, for the clear and detailed assessment he has just given us of the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I also want to welcome among us the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia.

While the report (see S/2021/409) before us sets out some serious issues of concern, I want to start by welcoming some of the positive developments of recent months. I am referring to the holding of local elections in Mostar last December, for the first time in 12 years, which is particularly welcome. The same goes for the adoption of the revised war crimes strategy. Ireland also very much welcomes the progress on strengthening the rights of survivors of wartime-related sexual violence. Conflict-related sexual violence remains a scourge in conflicts today, right around the globe. It really is encouraging to see that steps are finally being taken to make long-overdue redress to women in Bosnia and Herzegovina who have suffered from such heinous crimes.

Ireland fully supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's European Union (EU) perspective. We encourage the country to make full use of this year to move ahead decisively in this regard. Concrete progress on the reform of the electoral framework is needed, and we urge Bosnia and Herzegovina to be ambitious. Such reforms should include constitutional and electoral changes to meet European standards and guarantee that all citizens can exercise their political rights. We know that achieving these much-needed reforms will require all sides to show leadership and to engage in a sincere and constructive way.

In addition, progress on the 14 key reform priorities set out in the European Commission opinion is required, in particular on the rule of law. This is needed to restore citizens' trust in the judicial system. Bosnia and Herzegovina will move forward on the EU path only when it delivers on this critical mass of reforms. In this regard, Ireland commends the work of EU Special Representative Sattler and his team.

Like all of us, Bosnia and Herzegovina has faced serious problems as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I want to express Ireland's sympathy for the loss of life. We also welcome the disbursement of the EU's €80 million aid package to help Bosnia and Herzegovina address the pandemic's immediate consequences. We are pleased that the first deliveries of vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility have now begun — today, I believe. The EU's 2020 economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans will address longer-term strategic challenges facing the country.

Ireland remains greatly concerned by the divisive, negative rhetoric, in particular the glorification of war criminals, which serves only to deepen existing

divisions and diminishes the prospects for reconciliation. We call on all parties to repudiate such rhetoric, and instead to work towards common goals, address the challenges created by COVID-19 and step up the pace on implementing the reforms needed for EU accession.

This means addressing the needs of all citizens. We call on all parties to uphold and respect equality and inclusion as key principles, which will surely underpin a stable, prosperous future for Bosnia and Herzegovina. This path will also enable women to participate on a full, equal and meaningful basis in decision-making in all its dimensions. We would appreciate if sharper focus on the issue of gender equality could be included in reporting by the Office of the High Representative.

In conclusion, it is clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina now needs to take decisive steps towards overcoming the dismal legacy of the past. There is much challenging work ahead, and we sincerely hope to see decisive steps taken in that direction and achieved this year.

**Annex VII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Martin Kimani**

I wish you, Sir, a successful month as President of the Security Council, and I congratulate Viet Nam on its successful leadership in April.

I thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his briefing.

Kenya commends the Office of the High Representative for its efforts to seek progress on the five objectives and two conditions that remain the basis for the attainment of long-term stability for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We call on the authorities to work together to make progress on these five objectives and two conditions, as well as to ensure full compliance with the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Kenya notes the joint statement by the members of the tripartite Presidency to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the initialling of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge them to take tangible action to fulfil their commitment to respecting the provisions of the Agreement and the Constitution and to creating a society inclusive of all its peoples and citizens.

Kenya believes these are the minimum requirements for Bosnia and Herzegovina to chart its own way to a stable and functioning democracy, and that unity of purpose, especially at the leadership level, is critical to laying a firm foundation for successful governance.

We strongly urge the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to avoid any actions that might divide the people along ethnic or religious lines. Any attempt to do so would put at risk the peace that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve. Kenya insists that any resistance to inclusion and respect for diversity among leaders, particularly in a post-conflict multi-ethnic country, endangers the peace.

For Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been subject to violent conflict to the extent of demanding the intervention of the international community, and the Security Council, any statements or policies by leaders that embrace separation and ethnic nationalism must be closely watched and responded to robustly in order to prevent renewed conflict.

Like many countries across the world, Bosnia and Herzegovina is grappling with the continuing negative effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic. The pandemic is a common challenge that calls for unified efforts to control it. However, it is regrettable that political differences have stood in the way of unified and coordinated pandemic response action. Kenya urges all leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to put aside their differences and work together.

In conclusion, Kenya urges the authorities to strengthen their counter-terrorism strategies. These should include undertaking more efforts to prepare the legal and disengagement capabilities to handle repatriated and returning fighters who had travelled abroad to fight for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Shams. There should also be operationalization of a robust terrorism-prevention strategy that finds inspiration in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Kenya also encourages collaboration among the parties to create an environment conducive to the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes and places of origin, including by ending divisive rhetoric and the glorification of war criminals.

**Annex VIII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

I wish you every success this month, Mr. President, and congratulate Viet Nam once again.

I thank High Representative Inzko for his report (see S/2021/409), and I take this opportunity to express the support of my country for the work of his Office. I also recognize the presence of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and the European Union.

The citizens' mandate to their elected leaders and the formation of a Government must be a priority. The formation of a federal Government must not be held hostage to political calculations or revenge. More than two years on from the last general elections, the formal formation of a Government cannot be postponed. To that end, all political factions must respect and protect the institutional architecture. That is the guarantee and safeguard of stability and national unity. Hence our call to move swiftly on pending appointments.

We recognize the vital role of the Central Election Commission, which, in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic and despite the constant attacks against the institution, organized both the 2020 local elections in the Federation and in Republika Srpska, as well as the Assembly elections in Brčko district. Likewise, we are pleased that the citizens of Mostar participated in the first elections in the city since 2008.

However, we regret the lack of progress in the implementation of the "5 plus 2" agenda of five objectives and two conditions, mandated by the Security Council, which is a requirement for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. We call on the parties to move ahead in this regard, which is also a crucial component of their path to European integration.

The rule of law is the cornerstone of institutional stability. Narratives seeking the expulsion of foreign judges from the Constitutional Court undermine the rule of law. We therefore reaffirm the importance that the binding decisions of the judiciary and the provisions of the Constitution be respected at all times. The delay in the appointment of the four remaining judges to the Federal Constitutional Court has a direct impact on the important work of that judicial body, which is why we urge that the process be completed as soon as possible.

We are also following with concern the attacks against the Constitutional Court, the destabilization of the Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the request of the Republika Srpska to carry out a "peaceful dissolution". One of the guiding principles of the Dayton Accords is that the signatories would refrain from any act contrary to the territorial integrity or independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, both of which cannot and should not be negotiable. This is a principle of international law that is also enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations itself. It is essential to protect and preserve the political balance guaranteeing respect for the country's legal framework, and thereby the rights and equality of all groups involved.

Reconciliation, cohesion and inclusion must be the guiding principles. There is no room for hate speech, the glorification of war criminals, divisive rhetoric or historical revisionism. We call on the leaders of the various political factions to focus their efforts on seeking common ground and what unites them and to reject narratives that drive ethnic tensions and exploit disinformation, while keeping the well-being of their citizens always in mind.

In conclusion, my delegation makes a specific request to the Office of the High Representative to share information on the political representation of women in the country, in particular in the context of last November's elections.

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**Annex IX****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: French]

I thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his informative briefing.

My delegation welcomes the holding of local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially those in the city of Mostar, where none had been held since 2008.

However, this positive momentum should not obscure the institutional dysfunctionality linked to, among other things, the absence of a Federation Government, resulting from the non-implementation of the results of the 2018 federal elections. It is therefore crucial that key reforms be carried out, in particular the establishment of a transparent and inclusive electoral system as well as efforts to strengthen the rule of law.

Moreover, we urge the authorities to agree on a unified and coordinated approach in response to the coronavirus disease so as to mitigate its negative socioeconomic impact on the population.

The lack of significant progress in the implementation of the “5 plus 2” agenda of five objectives and two conditions is a major concern that requires appropriate responses. In that regard, we urge the parties to strictly respect the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as abide by the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular with regard to the future of the Office of the High Representative.

We continue to accord great importance to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. We therefore call on stakeholders at all levels to work towards a sociopolitical climate favourable to voluntary returns and the reintegration of returnees into their communities.

In conclusion, my delegation encourages the parties to demonstrate constructive political commitment to harness the positive momentum following the recent local elections, to promote dialogue and to refrain from any rhetoric or actions that might jeopardize peace and stability.

**Annex X****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

We fully support the Office of the High Representative and its ongoing work on the implementation of the “5 plus 2” agenda of five objectives and two conditions. And let me thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing today. We also appreciate his report on the current situation, outlining the challenges Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to face (see S/2021/409). It shows there is still considerable work to be done before we can see the full implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Norway also welcomes the continued work of the European Union-led Operation Althea. Its contribution to maintaining stability and a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina is important. And let me confirm that we fully support the sovereignty, territorial integrity and fundamental structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single, sovereign State comprising two entities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been greatly affected by the coronavirus disease crisis, experiencing significant negative socioeconomic and political impacts. There are worrisome trends of increasing unemployment, loss of income, setbacks within the health and education sectors and an increase in domestic violence. We express our support to, and sympathy with, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina during these daunting and exceptional times.

However, it is a sad reality that neither the Government of Bosnia of Herzegovina nor other levels of Government have been able to cope adequately with the crisis and mitigate the challenges now faced by the population.

That said, we would like to commend the holding of local elections last year. The year 2021 now constitutes a window of opportunity for reforms, as it is a year with no elections planned. We urge political actors to use this momentum for dialogue and to make a genuine commitment to democratic principles, towards a common agenda.

Appointing a new Government in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be a high priority, as two and a half years have already elapsed since the most recent general elections. Continued reforms are necessary to ensure the stability and welfare of the people. Reforms are also a prerequisite for further European cooperation and integration. All parties must prioritize the implementation of comprehensive reforms in a manner benefiting all citizens. That will require political will and strong leadership.

We also encourage the Government to make further efforts to strengthen the rule of law. Upholding standards of judicial impartiality and integrity and of police independence and accountability is essential to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina develops as a State based on the rule of law. Among other things, that means that it must abide by its international commitments on human rights and implement all the relevant judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

We also welcome the decision by the Council of Ministers to establish the Commission for Cooperation with NATO. By endorsing the new programme of reforms with NATO for 2021, Bosnia and Herzegovina will make progress on necessary reforms within its armed forces and secure increased interoperability with the alliance.

Women are key to peace. We therefore continue to call on all parties to ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of peacebuilding,

and we encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina to fully implement its national action plan on women and peace and security. We would welcome an update on this issue in the next report.

Let me conclude by reiterating that Norway will remain an active partner in supporting reforms and promoting European cooperation and integration with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Annex XI****Statement by Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Anna Evstigneeva**

[Original: Russian]

Let me congratulate you on the start of your presidency of the Security Council for the month of May and wish you every success in that capacity. Let me also thank the delegation of Viet Nam for its able presidency of the Council in April.

I would like to express our regret over the format chosen for this meeting. We believe that, given the improving health safety environment and the growing number of vaccines administered in New York, video-teleconference meetings of the Security Council seem somewhat unnecessary. We believe the Security Council needs to be courageous and return to Headquarters, with social distancing and other relevant recommendations in place. The Chamber is fully equipped to ensure that the necessary safety measures are observed. The in-person meetings that convene in the General Assembly Hall almost every day show that our proposal is very realistic. We call on the Chinese presidency to take the lead and promote the Security Council's return to its regular *modus operandi*.

We regret to state that the report of High Representative Inzko (see S/2021/409) is again very unbalanced and does not reflect the real situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Inzko presents biased, hand-picked information taken out of context and arbitrarily interprets that data so as to make it fit his version of events.

The report also implies that Bosnian Serbs and Croats are to blame for every obstacle to national reconciliation and that the only way forward is to strengthen the central authorities by reducing the constitutional rights of peoples and entities. Deliberate scaremongering can only create an illusion that the Office of the High Representative is the magic wand that is needed to quickly and efficiently solve all the problems. The self-serving conclusion is that Mr. Inzko is responsible for all positive changes, whereas the constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina are but a sad impediment to this process.

The report reflects a trend towards greater direct interference by the Office of the High Representative in local affairs, as well as a twisted interpretation of historical events, which is very worrisome. Such actions stoke tensions and do not contribute to inter-ethnic dialogue. That can be clearly seen from the Office's instructions and ultimatums issued to the Bosnian authorities, as well as from insinuations regarding the Serbian people's collective responsibility for the tragic events that unfold during armed conflict.

We strongly recommend that the High Representative refrain from interpreting his mandate too broadly, in particular with regard to the Euro-Atlantic agenda. The Office of the High Representative is not mandated to address Bosnia and Herzegovina's cooperation with NATO and the European Union. Under the constitutional regulations, those issues are a prerogative of the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities.

We suggest that Mr. Inzko stop acting as a self-proclaimed governor, putting himself above the law and the democratic institutions of a State that upholds the rule of law. It is entirely unacceptable, as the High Representative does not have any special tools for that purpose. We propose that our colleagues consider the report of the Government of the Republic of Srpska as a good alternative to the report of the Office of the High Representative.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is rather stable and poses no threat to international peace and security. We are not inclined to succumb to the panic that the

High Representative deliberately generates around the considerations of some people of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the future of their State. We do not think that the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Agreement, is in jeopardy. What is concerning are the efforts of certain Bosnian political forces to reshape the Dayton architecture to make it more unified. Such approaches are promoted from without, including by the High Representative.

We are convinced that full responsibility for the country's development and future should rest with the legitimate authorities, acting within their respective powers and duties. There is no alternative to internal, mutually respectful dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and compromise and consensus are the only ways to resolve the country's outstanding challenges. If the Dayton accords are to be amended, such changes must result from an agreement reached freely among the three constituent peoples and two entities in the country. External interference in the country's sovereign affairs and unilateral sanctions against the legitimate representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina are unacceptable.

For the sake of clarity, let me stress that the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina are the bearers of the country's sovereignty. It is they, rather than the High Representative or any external actor, who must define the future of the country and its path of development.

We therefore see no added value in involving the Office of the High Representative in the domestic process of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Indeed, the Office's activity runs counter to the principles of a democratic State governed by the rule of law, and the Office is not accountable to any national or international court. Besides, two of the three constituent peoples are very critical about the activity of the High Representative. That can be seen in the fact that, on 10 March, the Parliament of the Republika Srpska adopted a resolution demanding the closure of the Office of the High Representative and that its authority be delegated to the governing bodies of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That position cannot be ignored.

We reaffirm our position regarding the closure of the Office of the High Representative as soon as possible, as the Office is an anachronism of a protectorate over a sovereign European country. The terms and criteria of the closure should reflect the realities on the ground.

We would like to assure the Council that Russia fully supports the basic principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the equality of the three constituent peoples and the two entities with broad powers. The 1995 peace agreement remains fully relevant today. It envisages a balance of interests that is still fully effective and, what is more, has no alternative. The desire to destroy such a system could have dangerous consequences, not only for the Balkans but also for Europe as a whole.

In response to the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the discussion with Mr. Inzko convenes regularly, including in the Security Council, I will be brief.

Let me just address one point that he raised in his statement regarding Euro-Atlantic prospects for Bosnia and Herzegovina. As you rightly stated, this is not part of your mandate. Besides, you cited some consensus in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding this prospect, which I would consider as a distortion of facts. I am afraid that claims that the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in support of accession to NATO are not quite true.

**Annex XII****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Halimah DeShong**

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing, as well as his team's commitment to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We begin by expressing our deep concern over the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the population. We appeal to the international community to lend support in any way possible, and we underscore the importance of prioritizing the health and safety of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is critical that relevant authorities set aside political differences and create, with the greatest sense of urgency, a coordinated framework and unified response to counter the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and ease its impact on the population.

The rule of law remains a key characteristic of any society determined to secure stability, peace and good governance. It is important to combat divisive rhetoric and policies and corruption and to quell any conduct inimical to the overall peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region. To this end, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines urges all the relevant authorities and leaders to strengthen the rule of law.

In addition, we recognize the significance of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including as it relates to the creation of an environment conducive to the voluntary return and reintegration of refugees into communities. It is concerning that the most recent report (see S/2021/409) of on the implementation of the Peace Agreement documents the continued glorification of war criminals, divisive rhetoric and targeted attacks on religious property, all of which make the dignified return of refugees challenging.

This is evidence that efforts towards implementing the General Framework Agreement must be strengthened in order to move the country forward in a sustainable manner. We call on all parties to respect their obligations under the Agreement and fulfil in earnest their commitments made under international law and to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Wanton disregard for the rule of law and international commitments will only operate to undermine progress and move Bosnia and Herzegovina further away from reconciliation and durable peace.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines affirms its support for the stability, political independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the role of the Office of the High Representative. It is important that all the relevant actors and stakeholders work to implement the Peace Agreement in good faith and have an open dialogue about where implementation is falling short.

**Annex XIII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Viet Nam once again on its successful presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and sincerely wish China every success in its assumption of the presidency this month.

I thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his valuable briefing and report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement, and I welcome the representatives of the European Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, who are participating in the meeting in accordance with rule 37 of the rules of procedure.

My delegation welcomes the holding of the 2020 local and municipal elections, which included the first elections to be held in the city of Mostar since 2008. We commend the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina on its success in organizing the elections in spite of technical difficulties, particularly those imposed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Given the many problems that arose during the elections, which are documented in the report, my delegation calls on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward with the reform of the electoral system and to implement the technical recommendations made by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights following the 2018 elections, in addition to the recommendations that were previously made by the Group of States against Corruption and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.

My delegation remains concerned that negative ethnic rhetoric persists and that such rhetoric could deepen existing divisions, thereby hindering reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In that regard, I reaffirm the full support of Tunisia for a prosperous, stable and peaceful Bosnia and Herzegovina. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina must be preserved, and any actions that would sabotage reforms and threaten the unity and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina must be avoided.

We also urge all parties to refrain from making divisive calls that deepen ethnonational rifts, imperil stability and the overall peacebuilding process and undermine the improvements and progress to which the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina aspire.

My delegation continues to support the efforts of the Office of the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the mandate of the European Union-led Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to reinforce the efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to maintain a safe and secure environment. We call on all parties to join forces to implement the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With regard to the agenda of the five objectives and two conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we encourage all parties to fulfil their commitments in order to render the country fully autonomous.

Although the Dayton Peace Agreement was concluded a quarter of a century ago, these periodic reports clearly highlight the continuing stalemate. We would

like to remind all political leaders to avoid the conflicting objectives and interests that are a constant source of crisis and tension, to make the national interest of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina a priority and to pave the way for the younger generation to build a better future, a future rooted in ethnic and cultural unity.

Moreover, I express our solidarity with the authorities and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, in view of the recent increase in the number of cases and the difficulty in securing vaccinations. We once again call on all parties to unite and coordinate their efforts to combat the pandemic and mitigate its repercussions on people and the economy.

In conclusion, Tunisia reiterates that it fully supports all efforts to stabilize Bosnia and Herzegovina and bring about reconciliation among its various ethnic groups. Tunisia stands ready to work with various partners to support lasting peace and security, achieve sustainable development and fulfil the aspirations of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina for a better future.

**Annex XIV****Statement by the Deputy Counsellor of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Alice Jacobs**

I also would like to congratulate China on its assumption of the Security Council presidency for this month and wish it all the best. I would also like to thank and congratulate Viet Nam on its excellent stewardship of the Council in April. And I also thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing and his most recent comprehensive report (see S/2021/409).

As we have heard, like many other countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the grip of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Now more than ever, is the time for political leaders across the country to come together to fight the pandemic, to lead the country in its recovery and to take the necessary collective steps to ensure a future that benefits all citizens.

We urge all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to reinvigorate action to agree on and implement required electoral and limited constitutional reforms. There needs to be real political will and compromise from all sides in order to find a lasting solution. We urge the authorities to work closely with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and with the Venice Commission. The authorities should redouble their efforts to address the outstanding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, most notably the rulings in the Sejdić-Finci set of cases.

Successes are possible. We welcome the holding of local elections, especially in Mostar, where elections were last held in 2008. And we congratulate the Bosnia and Herzegovina Central Election Commission for successfully organizing two consecutive elections under challenging circumstances. We also congratulate the Office of the High Representative on its work in Brčko district on good governance, infrastructure development and private-sector growth.

What is unhelpful, and indeed a real threat to peace and stability, is the current political rhetoric around the “peaceful dissolution” of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This poses a serious threat to peace and stability, and therefore undermines the peace the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Instead, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina need their political leaders and representatives to focus their efforts on urgently combating the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthening the rule of law and implementing economic and other reforms that would move the country forward on its European path.

We reaffirm our unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single, sovereign State comprising two entities, with all three constituent peoples equal in their rights and in the rights of others.

The United Kingdom continues to support reconciliation efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the Western Balkans more widely, including through our project programming and our role in the Berlin process and the Peace Implementation Council.

We would like once again to remember the many thousands of victims and acknowledge the suffering on all sides of the Balkans conflicts. It is only through meaningful reconciliation across communities that we can fully overcome the painful legacies of the past. We once again call for an end to the glorification of convicted war criminals and the denial of the Srebrenica genocide. This definition has been officially recognized by two international tribunals as well as domestic

judicial bodies, and denial merely serves to reinforce the deep societal divisions that threaten to block Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress.

Finally, as is clear from the High Representative's report (see S/2021/409), the international community's role remains vital. In particular, the Office of the High Representative continues to have an essential role in maintaining the civilian aspects of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, and its work is central to supporting action by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including through the implementation of the "5 plus 2" criteria, to create that future. The Office of the High Representative and its use of executive powers, should the situation require it, continues to have the United Kingdom's full support.

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**Annex XV****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield**

I would like to congratulate China on its presidency of the Security Council for this month and wish it the best of luck. I would like to once again thank our colleague from Viet Nam for an extraordinary month in April. In addition, I would like to thank High Representative Inzko for his tireless service in the months since his previous briefing to the Security Council (see S/2020/1103) and over the tenure of his service.

The position of the United States on the Dayton Peace Agreement and on Bosnia and Herzegovina's future as a single State destined for the Euro-Atlantic community remains unchanged. We are committed to the principles of Dayton — that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a democratic, multi-ethnic, sovereign and independent State with unquestioned territorial integrity. There is no future for either of the entities outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United States supports the essential role of the High Representative in monitoring and supporting the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Accords. Bosnia and Herzegovina must meet the specific criteria established by the Peace Implementation Council — the “5 plus 2” agenda — in order to graduate from international supervision. Now is the time for renewed focus and action towards completing that agenda. That means, first and foremost, tackling rampant corruption, which threatens the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Right now, corrupt politicians, a judiciary under political influence, public offices that promote personal or party interests and State-owned enterprises that prioritize patronage all enable corruption to thrive. The result is that the country is losing its talented young people, as we heard from the High Representative this morning. They are immigrating to countries where they have greater opportunities, where they will be rewarded for their hard work and where Governments can be counted on to protect their rights and be responsive to their needs.

The only solution is for Bosnia and Herzegovina's politicians to strengthen their institutions and laws that fight crime and safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms. Bosnia and Herzegovina must be willing to adopt international legislative standards to ensure that agencies are sufficiently funded and are autonomous. Specifically, we agree with the High Representative that the adoption of the Brčko District Law on the Prevention of Conflict of Interest can serve as a model.

After corruption, the second main obstacle to progress is politicians who focus narrowly on ethnonationalist goals. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina should question why major party leaders are more focused on rhetorical battles than achievable reforms like fighting corruption and discrimination or improving the economy and the electoral process. There are no scheduled elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2021. As Secretary of State Blinken noted in his letter to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, that presents an opportunity to make necessary electoral and constitutional reforms.

It is time to move Bosnia and Herzegovina closer to European Union standards while also addressing the rulings by the European Court of Human Rights. The United States, along with others in the international community, will do all we can to promote compromise on a package deal among the parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Finally, in order to prepare for elections in 2022, we are urging officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina to address the election-integrity recommendations of the

Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Group of States against Corruption.

Everyone deserves to know that their vote counts. That includes the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We therefore agree with the High Representative that the Federation Government should be formed without delay and look forward to the full satisfaction of previously established objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

Let me end by once again thanking Mr. Inzko for his extraordinary efforts and commitment to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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**Annex XVI****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

I would like to begin by extending our congratulations and best wishes to China on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council in this month of May. Our thanks and appreciation also go to all members of the Council for the strong support and close cooperation they showed during our presidency in April.

I thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his briefing and welcome the presence of representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, as well as the Head of the Delegation of the European Union, at today's meeting.

We take note of recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina as highlighted in the High Representative's report. While there have been positive developments over the past six months, including the holding of local elections in November and December 2020, we remain concerned about the political instability, divisive rhetoric and lack of much-needed cooperation among the entities and communities in the country.

We are further worried that the coronavirus disease pandemic, having reached an all-time high recently, further complicates existing tensions. The situation continues to undermine the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. It is also regrettable to learn that the 5+2 agenda has made little progress, and was even rolled back, during the reporting period.

We strongly believe that the interests and well-being of the people must be placed at the centre of all efforts. In this regard, we urge all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to work together to overcome their differences, strengthen efforts and engage in constructive dialogue and confidence-building measures in a sustained manner. National reconciliation will be a driver of long-term stability and sustainable development towards a united and peaceful country for all its people. Focus should be given to, inter alia, socioeconomic development, enhancement of the rule of law and public administration reform.

Throughout this process, national ownership is essential. Primary responsibility lies with Bosnia and Herzegovina, its communities and peoples. At the same time, support from the international community, including from related countries, is no less important. We call for meaningful international support for Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with international law and the aspirations of the country and its people. Mediation and reconciliation efforts should focus on bridging the differences among parties and on bringing them together in joint endeavours for a future of peace and development.

Before concluding, we would like to reiterate the importance of respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the implementation of relevant treaties and Security Council resolutions. We call on all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to find a people-centred, lasting and peaceful solution.

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

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May, and to wish him and his delegation every success. We also welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have taken note of his report on the situation in the country covering the period from 16 October 2020 through 15 April 2021.

Let me first address the most urgent issues concerning the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The authorities have been undertaking all measures necessary to getting the sufficient number of vaccines for immunizing our population. It is important to underline that our authorities are not satisfied with the pace of delivery of the prepaid vaccines from the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility system, which is unreasonably slow. In that regard, it is essential to highlight the crucial role of the World Health Organization (WHO) in securing equitable access to COVID-19-related health products and vaccines. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our international partners China, Turkey, Serbia and Slovenia for their generous donations of COVID-19 vaccines.

In the meantime, our doctors, nurses, first responders and many others have undertaken indispensable efforts, risking their lives in the fight against this ferocious and highly contagious disease. Our hospitals, medical and other relevant institutions have done a tremendous job in combating this invisible enemy. During the COVID-19 outbreak, health services were provided to all persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including migrants and asylum seekers, irrespective of citizenship or health-insurance status.

In addition to affecting the health-care system, the pandemic has also had a strong impact on our economy. According to recent figures, Bosnia and Herzegovina's gross domestic product in 2020 declined by 4.6 per cent. Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities have introduced some essential measures to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic. Urgent financial packages have been created to help those suffering the most. For this reason, the assistance of international financial institutions, in particular the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, would be welcome, so as to overcome the negative economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that regard, the role of the United Nations will be indispensable through the United Nations country team and, of course, the United Nations Development Programme, the WHO and UNICEF, among others.

Let me now turn to some points relating to other aspects of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The security situation in the country continues to be peaceful and calm, which has been regularly reflected in the reports of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country's authorities are fully committed to overcoming challenges and implementing the reforms required for full-fledged integration into the European Union (EU). The authorities will be working towards implementing reforms and meeting EU requirements for attaining candidacy status this year. In accordance with the plan for implementing the recommendations set forth in the opinion of the European Commission, the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the rules of procedure of the Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union, which is an important step forward in the European integration.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has continued to actively participate in regional cooperation through the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Western

Balkans Fund and the Central European Initiative, inter alia, and maintains good-neighbourly relations with countries of the region. The fostering of friendly and constructive cooperation among the countries of the region on issues of mutual interest remains a top priority in the country's foreign policy. The cooperation of the Western Balkan States within the framework of the Berlin process remains a key driver of their integration into the European Union and of stability in the region.

During the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina has continued to fulfil its international obligations with respect to countering terrorism and violent extremism. We would like to underline that the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with other institutions in the country, is finalizing a new, revised strategy for preventing and combating terrorism. EU experts have been working together with Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to implement the 2018-2022 action plan for the prevention of money-laundering and financing of terrorist activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The rule of law is one of the highest priorities on Bosnia and Herzegovina's reform agenda. In this regard, it is necessary for existing law under rulings of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina be accordingly revised. The judicial institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to process individuals involved in fighting on behalf of terrorist organizations, as well as those who facilitate the recruitment of terrorist fighters. With regard to processing war crimes in domestic courts, we would reiterate that fighting impunity is vital for Bosnia and Herzegovina as a complex and multi-ethnic State.

The country also continues to pursue a very important planning, monitoring and evaluation process in the field of social and economic development that is fully in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, let me express our gratitude to the United Nations country team in Bosnia and Herzegovina for its outstanding contribution to and tireless efforts in assisting our institutions in fulfilling our development agenda. On 20 May 2021, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United Nations will sign a new five-year agreement, for the period from 2021 to 2025.

The international migrant crisis continues to pose a substantial challenge to the States of the region and their economies. For some time now, Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced a significant increase in refugees and migrants on its territory, most of whom crossed the borders illegally. Bearing in mind our lack of national capacity, as well as the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not the final destination for most migrants, our authorities need stronger international support. In this respect, for a comprehensive response, the country's institutions need much greater support from the EU, as well as from the relevant United Nations agencies.

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

I would like to reiterate that Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the United Nations peace and security efforts in conflict situations and has endorsed the call of Secretary-General António Guterres for a global ceasefire, in order to silence the guns, stop violence and speak out for peace. There is nothing more important than an immediate ceasefire in all corners of the globe to strengthen diplomatic action, help create conditions for delivery of life-saving aid and bring hope to places that are among the most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to cooperate with States Members of the United Nations and the broader

United Nations family on this critical issue, which is among the most pressing the world is facing today.

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

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**Annex XVIII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations, Ivan Šimonović**

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States (annex XX). I would like to make some further remarks in my national capacity.

I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing today and for his recent comprehensive report. Croatia remains committed to closely working with the Office of the High Representative.

Six months ago we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton-Paris Peace Agreement. Its major achievement was ending the war and achieving lasting peace and the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Today, 25 years after Dayton, we believe the country is finally turning the page, embracing more ambitious peacetime goals and engaging with more determination in the reforms necessary for its Euro-Atlantic integration path. We see this process as crucial for the long-term stability, security, prosperity and democratic transformation of the country. It is a challenging process, but it offers numerous benefits.

Croatia remains a staunch supporter of and advocate for Bosnia and Herzegovina. A few weeks ago, the Croatian Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Mr. Gordan Grlić-Radman, visited Bosnia and Herzegovina as a show of Croatian help and support for Bosnia and Herzegovina both in meetings with political and religious leaders and in public appearances. He also announced that Croatia will donate anti-coronavirus vaccines to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The stability and functionality of the country also greatly depend on the equality of all its citizens and of its three constituent peoples — Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. If equality is not fully respected, it has the potential to be a source of tension, functional gridlock and political crisis.

The equality of all citizens and constituent peoples can be ensured through the much-needed reform of the country's electoral law. A reformed elections law needs to be adopted prior to the 2022 general election in order to ensure equality of all citizens and among constituent peoples and remove all forms of discrimination in the electoral process. It is therefore clear that the vast opportunity that the year 2021 presents needs to be seized.

Given that the process is time-sensitive, an inter-agency working group must be promptly formed to tackle changes to the elections law that implement Bosnia and Herzegovina's Constitutional Court rulings and to address rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. Furthermore, credible and impartial elections-administration institutions are crucial for conducting free and fair elections. There is clearly a need to restore the confidence of citizens in elections, which will also positively contribute to the legitimacy of electoral outcomes. In addition, it is imperative to ensure that future elections are conducted in line with European standards and on the basis of relevant recommendations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Venice Commission.

Ongoing attempts to shift focus from much-needed comprehensive reforms contributes to a deepening of the challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What the country needs today is much more cooperation and far less division. Unfortunately, in recent weeks, we have been witnessing dangerous and unacceptable attempts to destabilize the country's already fragile political landscape. Speculation about

border changes that create new fears of instability, ethnic division and possible war should be strongly and unanimously condemned.

The responsibility for Bosnia and Herzegovina's future primarily lies in the hands of its peoples, political leaders and institutions. We should encourage them to reach compromises that will result in a more stable and functional country. It is time for the country to take ownership of crucial reforms and show that it is capable of successfully tailoring its own destiny. Looking backward and keeping the unsatisfactory status quo is prompting thousands of young people to emigrate. The successful completion of electoral reforms and the relaxation of political tensions can serve as a good foundation for shifting the country's focus to building sound political, economic and demographic perspectives.

In conclusion, Croatia strongly supports Bosnia and Herzegovina in fulfilling the 14 priorities defined by the European Commission and therefore its achievement of candidate status for EU membership. We also welcome the recent establishment of the Commission for Cooperation with NATO, which we see as evidence that solutions can be found and important steps made with regard to the country. As a member of the EU and NATO, Croatia will continue to strongly support Bosnia and Herzegovina in its ambition to integrate. In the process, we will extend our full political support for and technical expertise and assistance to the country.

A prosperous future for Bosnia and Herzegovina must be grounded on democracy and equality within its multinational society, on the rule of law and good governance, and on strong guarantees that human rights and freedoms will be enjoyed by all. In pursuing that noble cause, Bosnia and Herzegovina will always have friend and partner in neighbouring Croatia.

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**Annex XIX****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Serbia to the United Nations, Nemanja Stevanović**

Regrettably, yet another Security Council meeting on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is being convened against the backdrop of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

For more than a year now, the world, including the Western Balkans, has fought the invisible enemy. During this time of global hardship, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their people, have demonstrated strong friendship and solidarity between them. Our two countries have cooperated intensely in fighting the pandemic and its catastrophic consequences. They have secured, among others, a functional “green corridor” within the Central European Free Trade Agreement region to facilitate the flow of goods, particularly of products humanitarian in nature, and adopted measures for a free movement of citizens without the obligation to take PCR tests.

It is with pride and pleasure that I point out that, at the time of its own vaccination efforts, my country never hesitated in its resolve to help its neighbours, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, by sending them substantial quantities of vaccines. On 2 March, President Vučić flew to Sarajevo Airport to personally deliver 10,000 doses of vaccines. Following his meeting with all three members of the country’s Presidency on that occasion, the Government of Serbia granted an additional 20,000 doses on 8 April, to be administered to the people of Sarajevo canton in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the last week of March, citizens of our neighbouring countries were presented with an opportunity to get vaccinated in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš free of charge, without prior registration, and the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed great interest in this option. Serbia’s vaccine donations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, largest by far among its donations to other countries, continue unabated and are reflective of my country’s readiness to support and contribute, through active engagement, to that country in its fight against COVID-19. In addition to alleviating the problems and the gravity of the challenges, our cooperation in these testing times will help us strengthen and develop our work together as good neighbours in the days to come.

As we have shown repeatedly, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a very important partner for my country. We continue to support the process of strengthening our bilateral relations and good-neighbourly cooperation, just as we do with other countries of the region. We are committed to political dialogue and the building of trust and solidarity. The high-level dialogue has been intensified and a number of visits by high-ranking officials of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina has taken place lately. The cooperation between our two countries is most fruitful in the field of economy. This is manifested, in particular, in the investment field. Serbia is the third-largest investor in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are indeed appreciative of the progress made with regard to infrastructure projects and pleased that work commenced therein has not been halted during the pandemic. One such project is the construction of the highway between Belgrade and Sarajevo.

We trust and believe that regional cooperation is not only necessary but also achievable only if we all demonstrate our readiness to work together on the realization of the strategic vision of a better region for all in the spirit of good-neighbourly relations. Through its constructive and active engagement within the region, Serbia is making every effort to positively influence the pursuit of common interests and prove, in the process, that sharing common values will help us reach the same goals — that is, bring us closer to the membership of the European Union.

We support Bosnia and Herzegovina's European integration processes and welcome each and every step it takes in that direction.

Serbia's priority is to maintain peace and stability and, in that context, I would like to reiterate that, as a guarantor of the Dayton Peace Agreement, my country respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its three constituent peoples and two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, with which Serbia has special relations under the Dayton Agreement. It will continue to develop good and active cooperation with the central and entity authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina alike. Sovereign equality of States, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful solution of disputes and the respect of differences are the principles that Serbia upholds in its relations with all States. To that end, it supports all agreements that may be reached between the two entities and among the three constituent peoples and, in that context, welcomes the holding of local elections on 15 November 2020, as well as those in Mostar on 20 December 2020.

The agreement in Dayton was reached by compromise and reflects a delicate but hard-won balance among opposing concepts of the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Each and every attempt, therefore, to put one model prevalent more than 25 years ago ahead of another is less than conducive to the full and lasting stabilization of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is of paramount importance that we ensure peace and prosperity in the region, and we are opposed to any action that is contrary to the principles of the Dayton Agreement. We therefore recall that the mechanism to alter the agreement is well known; it calls for relevant agreement by the two entities and the three constituent peoples. The Republic of Serbia cannot accept interference or the imposition of solutions by anybody within or outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia fully respects the right of every country to conduct its foreign policy independently, including to join military-political alliances. Yet, it is equally respectful of their right to conduct such individual activities as may or may not lead to the membership of those alliances. As a guarantor of the Dayton Peace Agreement, Serbia will support every agreement or arrangement reached by the two entities and the three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina in a legitimate way.

Serbia calls on all actors in the political processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the country, as well as on the representatives of the international community, to demonstrate an ever-greater level of responsibility. In that connection, Serbia considers that dialogue within the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only way to heighten the level of confidence and achieve a compromise solution for issues relevant to the future development of the country and, by the same token, to the stability of the entire region. What is needed is to continue the policy of dialogue, good-neighbourly relations and cooperation, which have no alternative. As it did in the past, my country will continue to render its maximum and constructive contribution to these endeavours.

**Annex XX****Statement by Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, in its capacity as observer**

[Original: English and French]

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 27 member States.

The candidate countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania align themselves with this statement.

Let me first join others in thanking High Representative Valentin Inzko and reiterating the EU's continued support to his mission.

In December 2019, the Council of the European Union urged executive and legislative bodies at all levels of government to start addressing the 14 key priorities identified in the Commission Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union, in line with the interests of all citizens to advance towards the European Union.

Last year, Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities took some steps to address the Opinion's key priorities, including by the holding of local elections in Mostar for the first time since 2008, the adoption of the revised National War Crimes Processing Strategy and of the strategic framework on public administration reform at all levels of government, as well as the preparations for convening the Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee.

We call on the authorities of the country to build on this momentum and to seize the opportunity of this year 2021, which is a non-election year, to continue to engage on reforms, thereby giving tangible proof that Bosnia and Herzegovina is willing to do what it takes to become a member of the EU. Only by delivering on reforms will Bosnia and Herzegovina advance towards the EU.

This year in particular, we expect Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure that future elections are conducted in line with European standards by implementing the relevant recommendations of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and of the European Commission for Democracy through Law, and by ensuring the transparency of political party financing. Taking into account the institutional mechanisms that were set by the Dayton Peace Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to undertake further constitutional and electoral reforms to ensure equality and non-discrimination among its citizens, notably by addressing *Sejdić-Finci* case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

The EU regrets that Bosnia and Herzegovina's Constitution remains non-compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights, as per the ruling in the *Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* and related cases. The EU underlines that a number of Constitutional Court decisions have yet to be fully enforced. The EU calls for an inclusive process of electoral reform, through genuine dialogue and in line with European standards, that would eliminate all forms of inequality and discrimination in the electoral process. In this regard, we underline that no legislative or political steps should be taken which would make the implementation of the *Sejdić-Finci* and related European Court of Human Rights rulings more challenging.

We also expect Bosnia and Herzegovina to work with determination on the implementation of the other 14 key priorities, in particular towards strengthening the rule of law, in particular the independence and integrity of the judiciary, fighting corruption and organized crime, countering radicalization, guaranteeing

the independence of the media and the safety of journalists, promoting youth employment, education and gender equality, and renewing their efforts towards socioeconomic reforms.

We regret that the year 2020, which celebrated the 25th commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide and the anniversary of the Dayton/Paris peace accords, was marked by the persistence of nationalist rhetoric aimed at creating a climate of division, including from public authorities and politicians.

This year, 2021, we expect political leaders to take strong and concrete actions demonstrating their deep commitment to promoting reconciliation in the country. Revisionism, notably the minimization or denial of the Srebrenica genocide, and the glorification of war criminals contradict the values of the European Union and are incompatible with the prospect of integration into the European Union.

Despite our repeated calls for the establishment of an effective migration and asylum management system, authorities were unable to prevent or promptly address a serious humanitarian crisis last December, when several hundred migrants and refugees were left without decent shelter in the dead of winter. Tangible measures have since been taken by the authorities to address the most pressing humanitarian needs. These efforts must be continued, also taking into account the need for an equitable sharing of responsibilities between the entities and the cantons with regard to accommodation capacities, as well as the work aimed at strengthening border management capacities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, like the rest of Europe, continues to be severely impacted by the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In these difficult times, the EU remains firmly engaged in assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina to address the immediate health needs and long-term social and economic impact resulting from the pandemic. The Commission's 2020 Economic and Investment Plan and the delivery of vaccines — launched on the basis of recently-signed Instrument for Pre-Accession grants to cover the cost of vaccine resold to the Western Balkans by EU member States — as well as the important support being provided by Team Europe to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, once again demonstrate the EU's strong commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina and all the Western Balkans partners.

Lastly, with regard to the political and security situation on the ground and the importance of maintaining a safe and secure environment, the European Union reiterates its firm support to the EU-led military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR Althea, and to the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council. The EU urges all political actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina to abandon the divisive and secessionist rhetoric rooted in the past. We wish as well to reiterate the EU's unequivocal commitment to the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and multi-ethnic diversity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is our firm and unchanged position. The EU and its member States fully and firmly support Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country.

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