



Security Council

Distr.: General
8 May 2020

Original: English

Letter dated 8 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ms. Irena Hasić, Executive Director, Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Indonesia, the Niger, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference convened on Wednesday, 6 May 2020. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. The representative of the European Union also submitted a statement.

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 (COVID-19) pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Sven Jürgenson**
President of the Security Council



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

Allow me at the beginning to personally wish each member of the Security Council good health and to express the hope that their respective countries are successfully overcoming the ongoing pandemic. I am grateful that the Council is still willing and able to devote its time to a discussion on Bosnia and Herzegovina, which continues to require our attention and commitment.

In the report I have submitted to the Secretary-General for distribution to the members of the Security Council (S/2020/345, annex), I have set out the issues that Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing. These issues deserve the continued focus and support of the Council and the wider international community. I will now elaborate further.

As I note in my report, Bosnia and Herzegovina, like all countries represented in the Security Council today, is currently in the midst of the coronavirus disease pandemic. While it is still too early to make a thorough assessment, I am pleased to report that, so far, the country has apparently managed to avoid the widespread outbreaks and significant loss of life that has befallen some other countries.

While both entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, took early measures and initially showed that they were prepared to work together, including at the state level, the country has ultimately not succeeded in establishing a functional coordination mechanism to address the health crisis and appropriately coordinate measures to deal with the economic consequences of the crisis. As a result of the lack of coordination, there are currently different levels of measures applied in each entity, and it appears that there is no countrywide plan to mitigate the economic setbacks.

I encourage the authorities to follow the World Health Organization guidelines and, most importantly, to diligently enforce any and all measures in place. I sincerely hope that we do not see a resurgence of the virus.

In this crisis, the international community has done an excellent job of assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina by providing the country's authorities at all levels of authority with financial and material assistance as well as political and technical expertise. On the other hand, to date the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have failed to reach a political agreement on the distribution of financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund. Moreover, the greatest challenge for the country is how to minimize the risks of corruption related to the management of international financial and material assistance. While the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina must fully investigate corruption allegations, I strongly recommend that my colleagues in the international community establish their own rigorous mechanisms to track their financial and material assistance so as to avoid profiteering.

I would now like to acknowledge a significant development that occurred since I completed my report. On 28 April, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina announced the launch of the process to implement the 14 key priorities set forth in the European Commission's May 2019 opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for European Union membership. In so doing, the Presidency reaffirmed Bosnia and Herzegovina's commitment to European Union (EU) membership as a strategic foreign policy goal and a priority. The Presidency also established an ad hoc political working group. This is the result of the efforts of the EU and its international partners, and I wish every success for this endeavour in advance of the Western Balkans summit, which begins in Zagreb today.

I am concerned that some political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina will return to the pre-pandemic status quo, in which decision-making at the state level was blocked by parties of the governing coalition in Republika Srpska. With the blockade, these parties have attempted to force a discussion on the removal of the foreign judges from the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court. Should the foreign judges leave that Court, some political parties would de facto gain political control over the Court and then instrumentalize it to dismantle existing arrangements in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For this reason, I fully support the recent election of Ms. Angelika Nussberger, an outstanding lawyer and German national, to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court and look forward to the continuation of the work of international judges on the Court in accordance with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution and the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I would also like to report that, while the Republika Srpska Government was appointed quickly in 2018, the new Federation Government has not — more than 18 months since the October 2018 general elections — been appointed yet, as one political party continues to condition the establishment of the Government on changes to Bosnia and Herzegovina's election law. In addition, for more than 10 years the citizens of Mostar have been deprived of their right to vote in local elections, and the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* case remains unimplemented after more than 10 years. Other related human rights judgments also remain unimplemented.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is due to hold municipal elections in October of this year. The Central Election Commission (CEC) has warned that, due the failure to adopt the State budget for the year 2020, it may be unable to proceed with the necessary preparations that should begin by the time it announces the elections, which it is legally obliged to do by tomorrow, 7 May. The authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina must immediately ensure funding for the Central Election Commission to fulfil its obligations with regard to the elections, ideally by adopting the 2020 State budget or, alternatively, by allocating surplus funds specifically for this purpose.

The Central Election Commission has also warned that some of the required preparatory activities for elections, and possibly the elections themselves, may not be carried out on schedule owing to conditions and restrictions caused by the pandemic. It has proposed legislation that would give the Commission the possibility of delaying the elections by a period longer than that currently provided for by law.

It appears that the work of the Central Election Commission has become even more challenging, as some political parties are opposing the recent election of new CEC members. As a result, some political entities and institutions controlled by these parties refuse to cooperate with the CEC, which is unacceptable. There are court cases pending that challenge the election of CEC members, which will clarify their legality. Until a court ruling is made, those members shall remain in their positions, and all institutions and parties should fully cooperate with the CEC and its members.

This year, we will mark several important anniversaries. In July, we will commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. Measures related to the pandemic may make it necessary to reduce the scale of commemorative events, but the tragedy nonetheless looms large in our collective memory. International courts have ruled that what happened at Srebrenica in July 1995 was genocide, and nothing can change that fact. No one can rewrite history. But in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are still some who deny the genocide, reject war crimes verdicts and glorify convicted war criminals. This must stop. I urge all peoples to recognize

each other's suffering and come together to mourn. There is probably also a need to legally regulate the issue of genocide denial and holocaust denial.

In October this year, we will mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the landmark resolution affirming the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction. In this regard, I commend the Agency for Gender Equality, a part of the State-level Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, for maintaining the Coordination Body of the country's national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

I urge the authorities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina to make greater investments in the essential services being provided by civil society organizations and municipalities in support of women survivors of violence. I repeat my call on the authorities to do more to address gender inequality, in the light of the wage gap for women and the underrepresentation of women in the political sphere, despite the legal obligation of 40 per cent representation by women in the country's domestic institutions.

Lastly, in November, we will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Dayton, which was reached in Dayton, and in December we will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Agreement in Paris. In the spirit of renewing commitments, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with the international community, should recommit to preserving the Dayton structure through strengthening the State-level institutions and the competences they have assumed, in accordance with the State's prerogatives under the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We should recall that the first lines of the preamble to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina stress the importance of respect for human dignity, liberty and equality, as well as peace, justice, tolerance and reconciliation. The sooner the parties fully commit to these values, the sooner my mission will be complete.

Above all, Bosnia and Herzegovina must improve the rule of law, starting with changes to the Law on the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, and the fight against corruption. The rule of law is a cornerstone of democracy and of the functionality of any country. The rule of law is not only about adopting legislation, but about implementing adopted legislation in full. It is an ongoing commitment and must be the way of life.

The international community must not lose sight of what is at stake in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It must work together to preserve its collective investments in time and money over the past 25 years, not for their own sake but to honour the lives of those who were lost during the conflict as well as those who survived and continue to hope for a better future for themselves and for future generations. We should be patient with Bosnia and Herzegovina and remain very cautious about changing the international landscape in the country. We should, as the international community, work together. This is the only recipe for success in our efforts to ensure the long-term stability and viability of the Bosnia and Herzegovina State.

Finally, allow me to recall that, in many countries of the world, we are these days commemorating the end of the Second World War and are grateful to the allied forces that defeated Nazism. This also occurred in my own country, Austria, and our gratitude is expressed in the many monuments constructed there 75 years ago.

In Austria, the allied forces stayed some 10 years and oversaw the return of democracy. They prevented a revival of fascism and supported our impoverished country with the Marshall Plan. On a wider scale, one-time greatest enemies France

and Germany are now not only pillars of the European Union, but global pillars of peace and stability.

There can be no better example of reconciliation and forward-looking agendas. It is against this historical backdrop that I think of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where ultimately peace, stability and prosperity will also prevail.

Annex II

Statement by Ms. Irena Hasić, Executive Director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina

It is an honour and a privilege to be invited to participate in today's debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Security Council.

My name is Irena Hasić. I am the Executive Director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an organization that was established in 2007 and has since operated at the national and regional levels as a part of Youth Initiative for Human Rights. The founding idea of the organization was to provide new generations with an educational alternative on human rights and democratic values and to promote objective learning about the past wars that took place in the former Yugoslavia. Our main goal is to contribute to the creation of a peaceful society where all citizens are equal, regardless of their socioeconomic, national, ethnic or religious background — a society in which human rights, democracy and the rule of law are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina are at the core of our work, our vision and our mission, and we strongly believe that young people can contribute to the realization of the aforementioned type of society. To accomplish this end, however, young people need to be properly equipped. Filling the gaps in our educational system is crucial to offering Bosnia and Herzegovina youth the tools they need to become active and responsible citizens and promoters and drivers of change.

It is a well-known fact that young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina are divided in and by the school system. For instance, in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have 56 schools operating under the “two schools under one roof” paradigm. This paradigm was established as a temporary solution to overcome conflict, but it has since become permanent. Students in these schools are not only divided by ethnicity, they are also divided by their textbooks. Their histories, languages and cultures are separate. They even enter the school building through different doors.

That is why, to advance reconciliation and interethnic dialogue, it is crucial to promote interethnic socialization among young people. The youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina consider segregation to be a natural state of living. And how can we blame them? They grow up isolated from other ethnic groups, surrounded by convicted war criminals who are celebrated as national heroes, and are, on a daily basis, subjected to historical revisionism.

That is precisely where Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina has a role to play. In the years that we have been in operation, we have welcomed over 20,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 30 as participants in our programmes. They come from segregated and homogeneous communities from both the Federation and Republika Srpska. We organize alternative schools, open discussions, visits, exchanges and cultural events, in which we present young people with facts and enable them to connect and join forces beyond their ethnicity.

It takes time for young people to accept facts and each other, as most of their pre-existing values are based on stereotypes, inherited ethnocentric narratives and the inability to accept anything that is different from what they have known. But it is not impossible to change. In a safe and comfortable place, we create an opportunity for young people with different religious and ethnic backgrounds to interact, learn and grow.

Last summer we organized a youth forum and invited young people from all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate. They held open discussions on three topics, namely, youth and the political situation, activism in formal education and reconciliation. The objective was to hear their thoughts about the obstacles they are facing in their local communities, what they need to overcome those problems and how we, as an organization, can assist them. Their recommendations were clear: young people need a proper political education and must be made aware of the importance of voting and their trust in institutions must be restored. They are aware of flaws and irregularities in the election process. It is time to modernize it.

Young people need information on how they can contribute to change and the tools and mechanisms to bring their ideas to life. They need help from us to build that capacity and to motivate their peers to become more engaged. I must say, in brief, that young people lack a voice in their communities. They need us to be the link as they do not feel strong enough themselves.

However, in this battle to foster change and improvement, civil society organizations continuously face not only financial but also institutional obstacles. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education of Republika Srpska deprives us of access to schools on the territory of Republika Srpska. In the Federation, we must obtain permission to work from every canton because each one has its own ministry of education.

Civil society in Bosnia has played a major role in providing a more solid foundation for democratization, the reconciliation process, freedom of the media, the fight against hate speech and fund transparency. The current political elite, the educational system and local communities will never foster cultural and ethnic diversity; rather, they portray diversity as a weakness, as a weed to be uprooted. Therefore, it is up to civil society to create programmes to advance human rights and democratic values so that we can create a better future for and with young people. It is up to civil society to restore Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country with a rich and vibrant past and an even brighter future.

It has been 25 years since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed. The Agreement ended the war and the ethnic cleansing. It also transferred the conflict onto the political stage, leaving all sides unsatisfied, albeit at peace. Today, we are faced with an administrative machinery that is not only soaking up our gross domestic product but is also unable to come to joint decisions on economic and administrative reforms. The current administrative configuration is far from sustainable; instead of being invested in the country's development and economy, education and culture, our wealth is spent on an ineffective administration and bureaucracy. That directly affects Bosnia and Herzegovina's ordinary citizens, who are held hostage by political corruption, a lack of accountability and nationalism. With the highest percentage of youth unemployment in Europe, an increasing number of young people are emigrating abroad in search of prosperity and better, safer living conditions. There is an urgent need for reforms and investment and, according to us, a definitive need to update the Agreement. For that, we need help from outside.

It has been demonstrated again and again that the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is getting frustrated. Such an intense atmosphere risks triggering violence and escalating into conflict. So, please, I am asking the Council not to disregard and misinterpret the red flags that Bosnia and Herzegovina and its people are sending it.

The pandemic the world is facing right now has taught us one thing — we cannot survive without help from others. The future of humankind lies in humanity

and solidarity. After 25 years of transitional justice, peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives, Bosnia and Hercegovina remains a topic to be discussed and assessed, an issue to be resolved. It remains a question mark. It is time to find answers together.

I thank the Council for its dedication and time.

Annex III

Statement by Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations

Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement to be made by the delegation of the European Union.

I thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his briefing and his and his office's valuable work and welcome Ms. Irena Hasić's briefing.

The recent coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak has shown us how interdependent we are. We encourage political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue cooperating and coordinating their actions in the fight against the pandemic. We also call for full respect at all levels of the constitutional and legal framework, as well as adherence to international human rights law. It is essential that all political leaders practice good governance at a time when it is most needed, including by making the prevention of corruption a part of their response to the pandemic.

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not stand alone. The European Union (EU) has announced over €3.3 billion in financial support to its partners in the Western Balkans. The Union's commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina is a display of its firm belief that the country's future lies within the EU. The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina decided on 28 April to start a reform process on key priorities identified in the EU Commission's opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership application. That is a welcome step forward. It is crucial, however, for that intention to translate into policy soon. We underline the need for progress in matters of rule of law and the fight against corruption. The independence of the judiciary has to be guaranteed and strengthened, one of the aims being to reform the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council. We welcome the appointment of Ms. Angelika Nussberger as international judge at the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In order to ensure the full exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, it is important that rulings of the European Court of Human Rights are complied with fully and in a timely manner. We regret that, so far, the Bosnian authorities have failed to comply with the ruling in the *Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* case.

Ms. Hasić's briefing underlines the need for Bosnia and Herzegovina's population, and particularly its political elite, to deal with its past in order to come to a durable peace. We all know that no reconciliation is possible in Bosnia and Herzegovina without sincere recognition of the crimes committed during the war, including the Srebrenica genocide almost 25 years ago. Revision or denial of war crimes and the glorification of war criminals all undermine that process. War criminals must be held accountable. Impunity is not acceptable.

Last week, Belgian young people pleaded in favour of having a voice in matters of peace and security. The inclusion of youth in transitional justice processes enhances the effectiveness of those processes. Ms. Hasić stressed the need to invest in education to avoid a repetition of the past. A system created in 2002 to overcome differences in an interim phase has now become symbolic of how Bosnia and Herzegovina's transition has not materialized. The "two schools under one roof policy" is an impediment to reconciliation. It prevents the development of a shared vision and understanding of the past, instils ethnic prejudice and reinforces mistrust. We can only add our voice to the calls of various international bodies and urge the relevant authorities to end discrimination and segregation in education. Schools are supposed to promote tolerance and mutual understanding as a basis for well-functioning democratic societies.

Annex IV**Statement by Mr. Yao Shaojun, Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations**

China thanks High Representative Inzko and Ms. Hasić for their briefings.

China has maintained a consistent position of respecting Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity. We respect the choice of its people in charting the way forward for their country and support its various ethnic communities living in harmony and seeking common development.

China welcomes recent positive progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the formation of the State-level Council of Ministers at the end of last year. However, we are concerned at the current trend of political division. Peace and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the common interest of the international community and the countries of the region. In that regard, China would like to make the following three points.

First, political commitment should be reaffirmed. Political mistrust is an important factor in many matters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The relevant parties should take the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement as an opportunity to put the interests of the country and the people first by strengthening dialogue and cooperation, increasing mutual trust and avoiding divisive words or actions. Political leaders should work together to unify the country, enhance State-level institutions and improve the efficiency and capacity of decision-makers.

Secondly, development should be vigorously promoted. The population drain impedes Bosnia and Herzegovina from fulfilling its development potential. As pointed out in the High Representative's report, over 200,000 people have left Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2013, including some 60,000 in 2019 alone. Youth are the future of a country. All parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina should increase investment in education, health care and infrastructure and promote economic and social development. Only by doing so can an environment conducive to people of all ethnic groups living in harmony be created.

Thirdly, the international community should play a positive role. The issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina is complex and sensitive. China believes that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have the ability and wisdom to solve their own problems. The international community should listen with an open mind to the positions and concerns of all parties and take a balanced and prudent approach. We hope that the High Representative will work according to his mandate and contribute to the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We also hope that the European Union-led military operation there will continue to strengthen engagement with the parties concerned and help maintain security and stability in the country.

Fighting coronavirus disease is a significant challenge for the entire international community. China commends the relevant parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina for stepping up coordination and cooperation to combat the pandemic. We hope that they will take combating the pandemic as an opportunity to stand in solidarity and enhance coordination and cooperation. The international community should actively support Bosnia and Herzegovina. On our part, China has provided masks, medical gowns and testing kits to Bosnia and Herzegovina since the outbreak there. We have also organized a video conference among our experts to share best practices. We will continue working with the international community to support Bosnia and Herzegovina to the best of our ability and doing our part to help the country achieve lasting peace, stability and development.

Annex V**Statement by Mr. José Singer Weisinger, Special Envoy to the Security Council of the Dominican Republic**

At the outset, we would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko for his report and his perseverance in fulfilling his mandate and Ms. Irena Hasić for the important information provided. We recognize that youth and women empowerment initiatives are a unifying bridge as they ensure their active participation in the democratic and decision-making processes in their communities.

It is timely to recognize the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina from all sectors for their solidarity and unity in facing the current pandemic. It is a sign that unity is strength. However, we concur with the High Representative that for the achievements resulting from unity to be sustainable, it is crucial to respect the country's constitutional and legal framework. That includes strict adherence to international and European standards on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We welcome the news that the appointment of the new Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers at the State level was completed at the end of last year. We take this opportunity to call on the political leadership to appoint the remaining authorities at the federal and cantonal levels. While we acknowledge that this is taking place during a global crisis, talks nevertheless need to be resumed to finalize pending issues, such as the long-awaited elections in the city of Mostar.

We are concerned that in the midst of a pandemic, a State budget has not been approved to meet the most urgent needs. In that regard, we would like to acknowledge the international community's readiness to support the fight against coronavirus disease in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the same vein, we would like to stress that, although the fight against the pandemic must be the focus of all efforts and the current situation may affect the holding of local elections in October, the approval of the State budget for the organization of those elections is key.

We would like to emphasize the great importance of the progress made so far in stabilizing peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those achievements as a nation must not be threatened in any way. In that regard, we reiterate the invitation to political leaders to refrain from destabilizing rhetoric.

It is necessary to move towards open, transparent and constructive negotiations, which will allow prioritization of issues such as integration, good governance, peace and sustainable development. However, in order to move in that direction, it is necessary to understand the importance of fully implementing the General Framework Agreement for Peace. We regret that there continue to be setbacks in the achievement of the 5+2 agenda to close the Office of the High Representative.

In conclusion, the Dominican Republic reiterates its recognition of the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and calls on all those responsible for the success of the peace process to offer their support to the Office of the High Representative and European Union-led Operation Althea. Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its two entities — Republika Srpska and the Federation — needs the political will to allow it to consolidate its path to sustainable development. This year we commemorate two important dates: the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide in July and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Let those anniversaries be a reminder to all parties to move towards true reconciliation.

Annex VI**Statement by Mr. Sven Jürgenson, Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations**

We align ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the delegation of the European Union (EU).

As we hold our discussion here in the Security Council, EU and Western Balkan leaders are discussing how to strengthen their cooperation, especially to overcome coronavirus disease (COVID-19). I am glad that Bosnia and Herzegovina is receiving full attention on both continents today.

It was a pleasure to hear Ms. Irena Hasić's realistic explanation of young people's needs and aspirations in the country. Estonia supports non-governmental organizations that promote the greater participation of young people in shaping their societies.

I would like to thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his twenty-third regular report to the Secretary-General (S/2020/345, annex) since assuming his post in 2009. It is admirable that, although the size and budget of Mr. Inzko's team have decreased by more than 50 per cent since then, the tasks that it tackles remain closer to 100 per cent. Estonia would like to state its full support for a robust and effective Office of the High Representative, which is still necessary in order to fulfil its mandated responsibilities.

Although the appointment of the Council of Ministers in December was a very positive development, we note with much regret the paralysation of the work of many State-level institutions, including the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly, by the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats party. It was also disappointing to learn that, during the latest reporting period, the authorities of the Republika Srpska intensified their divisive rhetoric and resorted to frequent actions targeting the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and even its Constitution. Although leaders in the country showed preparedness to cooperate, especially at the beginning of the crisis, they should now halt regressing towards the pre-pandemic status quo. In Mr. Inzko's opinion, is there any possibility of that happening?

We are glad that doctors throughout the country have shown strong efforts to cooperate with each other, including in the divided city of Mostar, as lately reported in the media. As Bosnia and Herzegovina hopes to defeat the pandemic, the continued pursuit by some State authorities to block decision-making at the State-level and to restrict revenue to State institutions is very regrettable. It can hinder the ability of institutions to appropriately function and respond to extraordinary situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Estonia stands in strong support of the EU's solidarity with the Western Balkans and its mobilization of the substantial financial support package of €3.3 billion to help the region overcome the COVID-19 crisis. We commend the work and support of all others that provide material and other assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office and the United Nations Development Programme. Also, the European Union-led Operation Althea is a strong contributor to the country's work in maintaining a safe and secure environment. We fully support its continued executive mandate and call on all parties to refrain from any actions or policies that could destabilize the security situation in the country.

In July this year, we will commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. The downplaying of that tragic historical event in any way is unacceptable. We are concerned over reports about the hailing of war criminals and

institutions being named after them. Spreading nationalist and provocative rhetoric, denying war crimes or glorifying convicted war criminals is not in line with the country's Euro-Atlantic perspective.

We hope that the municipal elections in October will be free and fair, and we call on the authorities in the country to start with preparations in a timely manner and to find a solution that will allow elections to take place in the city of Mostar. We also call on the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to strengthen the rule of law and to implement binding judicial decisions.

Estonia is certain that Bosnia and Herzegovina's future is connected with the Euro-Atlantic path, in line with the legitimate aspiration of its citizens. We welcome the recently renewed commitment of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency to fulfilling the 14 key priorities of the European Commission opinion. In order to move forward, all political leaders of the country should deliver concrete results and implement fundamental reforms. During this difficult time, and on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton Agreement, we call on all levels of the Government to work in solidarity and unity.

Annex VII**Statement by Mr. Wadid Benaabou, Deputy Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations**

I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ms. Irena Hasić, the representative of the non-governmental organization Youth Initiative for Human Rights, for their presentations. I also welcome the presence at this meeting of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and the European Union. France fully aligns with the statement that the representative of the European Union (EU) delegation will deliver.

The challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain significant, as the High Representative has explained. However, I note several positive developments that show that cooperation and unity can prevail.

First of all, I would like to welcome the response of the leaders and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the challenge of the coronavirus disease pandemic. The swift reaction of the authorities at all levels and the good coordination among all actors made it possible to keep the spread under control despite the political crisis. The European Union has also demonstrated its solidarity by delivering assistance in order to respond to the most urgent medical needs and to ensure economic recovery, supplemented by bilateral aid from its member States.

Secondly, the formation of the Council of Ministers at the level of the central State last December was a positive development that had long been awaited since the general elections of 2018. However, we regret the decision to block the normal functioning of the State-level institutions that was taken in mid-February following a decision of the Constitutional Court. We call on all stakeholders to respect the rulings of the Constitutional Court and to enable the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to function normally as soon as possible. The 2020 budget must also be adopted in order to enable the State to function. In addition, we call for the formation of the Federation entity Government and the holding of local elections in Mostar.

Thirdly, I wish to reaffirm France's conviction regarding the European perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans. The European Union remains fully committed to this issue, as demonstrated by the organization today of a leaders' video-teleconference of the EU and the six Western Balkan countries. We welcome the agreement reached last week among the three members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the implementation of the European Commission's recommendations regarding the rule of law and democratic functioning in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We hope that that agreement will pave the way for the resumption of the normal functioning of State-level institutions. Reforms in the economic and social fields, the rule of law, democratic functioning and human rights are more necessary than ever for the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina and for European rapprochement. I also recall the important contribution to the stability of the country by the European Union-led military Operation Althea, mandated by the Security Council.

Finally, France continues to strongly condemn the glorification of war crimes and criminals, whatever their community of origin. National and international justice has done a remarkable job in prosecuting and convicting those responsible for atrocities committed during the conflict. It is unacceptable to challenge judicial decisions. I am thinking in particular of the genocide in Srebrenica as we commemorate its twenty-fifth anniversary this summer. Transitional justice and reconciliation processes remain the only solid foundation for the future of the country. In that regard, I fully concur with what the German Ambassador said about the French-German reconciliation, which can be a source of inspiration.

Annex VIII

Statement by Mr. Muhsin Syihab, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations

Let me begin by thanking High Representative Valentin Inzko and Ms. Irena Hasić for their important briefings.

We learned from the report (S/2020/345, annex) that there has been no significant progress on the ground. On the contrary, we have even seen roll back rhetoric on one substantive issue. We cannot let the memory of Srebrenica fade away by glorifying the criminals. Such confusing and divisive rhetoric is unnecessary, irresponsible and unacceptable. In that context, I would like to highlight three points.

The first issue is support for the State-level institutions. Political divisions only perpetuate strife. Intensified harsh and divisive rhetoric cannot bring Bosnia and Herzegovina together. Indonesia calls on the parties to respect the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, existing legislation and the integrity of State-level institutions. In that regard, we would like to emphasize our view, expressed at every meeting on Bosnia and Herzegovina, that the rule of law should be respected so that the basic structure of democracy is maintained and can be further strengthened.

We support the High Representative's view with regard to the necessity for the authorities at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina to live up to their commitment to a peaceful State. In that regard, let us think for a moment about the younger generation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are still looking for the true meaning of peace. The younger generation, born after the war, may wonder why the conflict, the division and the segregation continue and are so important. Can we answer that question for the younger generation of Bosnia and Herzegovina? While echoing Ms. Hasić's concern, I would like to emphasize that investing in young people is tantamount to investing in the future, which also means investing in peace.

The second issue is the need for innovative solutions. As we are all aware, and as also emphasized by the latest report, there has been no substantial progress in implementing the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina since it was signed in 1995.

We also share the High Representative's concerns about political elites who practise a policy of blocking all decision-making at the State level. That includes the blockage of the State budget, the appointment of the Chair of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers, before finally being settled, and many other State-level legislation processes.

Year after year, there is no significant progress on the five objectives and two conditions necessary for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. The approach needs to be changed. The system needs to be evaluated. The strategy needs to be revised.

Having said that, we urge the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina to seek innovative solutions to address the stalled progress in the country. As long as there is no innovation, progress remains distant. It may be timely to consider all measures for further advancing the peace process. We also invite the High Representative to consider imposing the Bonn powers to address local parties that seem unable, or unwilling, to cooperate.

My third and last point is responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis. We highly appreciate the sincere and swift cooperation and coordination that have been demonstrated by the political and institutional leaders in Bosnia and

Herzegovina in addressing the global pandemic, especially during the early stage of COVID-19.

We believe that this pandemic will teach us a very important lesson. It is that political identity and divisions cannot save humanity. Solidarity is the key. We hope that this crucial turning point will endure far after the pandemic passes and that no accommodation will be left for selfishness, ego and hatred.

I would like to conclude by expressing Indonesia's long-standing support for a peaceful and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country that is strong and united by putting the interests and voices of the people first, particularly the voice of its younger generation.

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

At the outset, allow me to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his clear and concise briefing.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as elsewhere in the world, the unprecedented human tragedy of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) affects individuals, families, communities and society as a whole.

At this time of crisis, allow me to commend the cooperative and coordinated efforts of political and institutional leaders to save lives and preserve livelihoods. Nevertheless, the success of those efforts remains dependent on their adherence to the country's legal and constitutional framework, their transparency and their full respect for international standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The constructive role of the international community in providing financial and material assistance to the political and institutional leaders to address the COVID-19 pandemic also deserves to be highlighted.

The challenge to sovereignty, territorial integrity, competencies and institutions at the State level not only poses a serious threat to the overall political stability, but also represents a setback for key achievements in the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is therefore the responsibility of all parties to work in accordance with the constitutional and legal framework to ensure the functioning of all institutions and their close cooperation in the interest of the citizens and all levels of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The lack of progress in resolving electoral issues is also a major source of concern. Therefore, all appropriate measures must be taken for the establishment of the federal Government following the 2018 general elections and the resolution of problems arising from the decision of the Constitutional Court on the electoral system of the city of Mostar, where no elections have been held since 2008.

Furthermore, I urge the political parties to accelerate their efforts to support female candidates, which would better reflect the composition of the population and move Bosnia and Herzegovina in the right direction towards gender equality.

The realization of the right of refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes of origin remains at the core of the objectives of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that regard, it is the responsibility of the authorities at all levels to create the political, economic and social conditions conducive to the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons, without preference for any particular group.

The European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina plays a vital role in supporting efforts to maintain a viable and secure environment. To that end, I urge the authorities to focus their efforts on the professionalism, accountability and coordination of the police service in order to serve the citizens and provide them with personal security and protection.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to see the implementation of forward-looking reforms that support and enhance the security, stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the promotion of local ownership of the General Framework Agreement for Peace.

Annex X**Statement by Mr. Vassily Nebenizia, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations**

At the outset, I would like to thank High Representative Mr. Valentin Inzko and Ms. Hasić for their briefings. We listened carefully to what Mr. Inzko has just said, and we carefully studied the written report (S/2020/345, annex). We regret to observe again that the quality of the High Representative's reports has not improved. Unfortunately, we regret to note that criticizing the Bosnian Serbs for everything that happens in Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a standard pattern of those reports. Serbs are blamed for all the challenges now facing Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a result, the report does not give a balanced picture of the situation on the ground.

The High Representative ignores the fact that the majority of issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina arise from the lack of consensus among the three constituent peoples. Instead of playing the blame game, the Office of the High Representative should encourage dialogue between the communities and provide good offices in order to help Bosnians resolve their disputes. The time for external governance is over. The Bosnian people deserve the right to determine their fate on their own.

We do not share the report's assumptions on alleged stagnation and even rollbacks in the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, including the five objectives and two conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. In our view, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is calm and stable and does not represent any threat to international peace and security. Nevertheless, the High Representative is still finding made-up arguments in order to preserve indefinitely the outdated international protection over this sovereign and independent State. We call on our colleagues in the Security Council and the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council to take the necessary steps for the early closure of the Office of the High Representative.

In his report, the High Representative refers to the need for the fulfilment of Bosnia and Herzegovina's so-called "standing obligations" with regard to NATO and notes that the authorities at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina are committed to a State that is "irreversibly on course for Euro-Atlantic integration" (S/2020/345, annex, p.4). We have to emphasize that there is no consensus in Bosnian society on this issue. The High Representative is not entitled in any way to promote the European or Euro-Atlantic integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina and should not abuse his mandate by doing so. His responsibility is to uphold the civilian aspects of the General Framework Agreement. We must recall that decisions of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on foreign policy should be consensus-based.

We call on the High Representative to pay more attention to the numerous pressing issues in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, among them the pending appointment of a new Federation Government and the Constitutional Court, the incomplete collegium of both Houses of the Federation Parliament, the lack of progress on holding local elections in the city of Mostar, and the absence of the constitutional equality of Serbs in the Federation cantons.

We are wondering why the High Representative almost demonizes the activities of the Republika Srpska Government-appointed Independent International Commission for Inquiry into Suffering of all Peoples in the Srebrenica region in the Period 1992–1995. As we understand it, these structures have been established due to the well-known flaws in the activities of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. We have expressed our concerns on this matter more than once.

Documents from the United Kingdom archives, declassified and published in January this year, reveal important details of the events during the armed conflict in Srebrenica. It has been confirmed, in particular, that the Bosnian Serbs were subject to attacks from the region under the protection of United Nations Blue Helmets. We hope that the Independent International Commissions appointed by the Republika Srpska will help shed light on these tragic events.

We call on all international presences in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the Office of the High Representative, the Delegation of the European Union and the Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to align their activities in compliance with their respective mandates and the policy approved by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council to promote local ownership over international decision-making.

As one of international guarantors of the Dayton Peace Agreement, Russia will continue to monitor to ensure that Agreement is strictly implemented. We support the inter-Bosnian dialogue based on mutual respect. We hope that all international partners who are genuinely interested in long-lasting stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina will promote cooperation between the Bosnian parties and refrain from biased or unilateral assessments, which would only exacerbate the situation.

We urge Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs to use collective approaches to settle outstanding issues on the solid basis of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which guarantees the equality of the three constituent peoples.

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

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines extends its gratitude to Mr. Valentin Inzko for his briefing and his most recent report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2020/345, annex). We recognize his enduring commitment to his mandate and to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the objectives and conditions established by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council. We also thank Ms. Irena Hasić for her informative briefing, and welcome all representatives to this meeting.

We begin by expressing our concern over the coronavirus disease pandemic, which has already had a crippling effect on the world. In this regard, we acknowledge the preparedness of the political and institutional leaders to cooperate and coordinate their response to this crisis, as stated in the High Representative's report. We urge all parties to refrain from any divisive rhetoric that may hamper the response and have an adverse impact on the political environment. The novel coronavirus pandemic is a collective action problem that requires the unity and cohesion of all parties.

As it relates to the Peace Agreement, we continue to encourage collaboration among the parties in accordance with international law, and emphasize the need for diplomacy. We further underscore the need for constructive dialogue among communities within Bosnia and Herzegovina. In order to achieve long-term peace and reconciliation among all persons of all communities, it is important that there be inclusive national ownership over the political and peace processes. Regrettably, the High Representative notes in his report that there has been no serious commitment to implementing the objectives and conditions of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council. We hope that the parties can break that deadlock.

Finally, we call for greater representation of women, whose role in society can be neither dismissed nor diminished. The women and peace and security agenda must be brought to the forefront, and to that end we emphasize the need for gender justice in all spheres.

Annex XII**Statement by Mr. Xolisa Mabhongo, Deputy Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations**

We would like to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for the latest report of his Office on the political, security and humanitarian situation in the country (S/2020/345, annex). The work of his Office remains invaluable for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the region.

At the outset, South Africa lauds the efforts of all sides to respond to the coronavirus disease pandemic and hopes that this will be seen as an opportunity to realize unity of purpose even beyond its containment. With respect to measures taken to address the pandemic, South Africa concurs with the assessment of the Office of the High Representative that all efforts must be well devised, properly targeted and closely coordinated in order to improve their success.

The lack of progress in the dialogue process remains an issue of concern. We therefore call on all parties to remain seized with the objectives of the country's dialogue and to refrain from actions that could undermine its prospects, thus stalling reconciliation and durable peace. The existing agreements and mechanisms remain relevant to taking the dialogue process forward and we urge all stakeholders to work within their parameters and in good faith in support of that objective. More importantly, we wish to emphasize that national ownership of the peace process resides with all Bosnia and Herzegovina stakeholders.

The ongoing disagreements between the political parties continue to negatively impact the fulfilment of the agenda of five objectives and two conditions established by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation. In addition, provocative, divisive and nationalistic rhetoric could undermine stability in the country and threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State.

On a positive note, we welcome the appointment of the Chair of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers. We believe that this will assist in paving the way for dialogue and cooperation. Nonetheless, other outstanding appointments, including those of the Constitutional Court judges and other entities, continue to hamper the effective functioning of the State. Accordingly, we encourage all parties to expedite the conclusion of these important processes.

In closing, let me reiterate my delegation's call for constructive dialogue among all entities, as well as among the various Bosnian structures and the High Representative. It is only through dialogue and compromise that a political settlement can be reached that will bring peace and stability not only to Bosnia and Herzegovina but also to the wider region.

Annex XIII**Statement by Mr. Kais Kabtani, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tunisia to the United Nations**

I thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his briefing and his report (S/2020/345, annex) on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ms. Irena Hasić, Executive Director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for her presentation. I would also like to welcome the representatives of the European Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia.

At the outset, I wish to express our support for and solidarity with authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and commend their coordinated efforts to combat the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and mitigate its effects. As underscored in the report, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that acting within the constitutional and legal framework to ensure the full functionality of all institutions and their close coordination is in the common interest of all levels of Government and of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We believe that such coordination contributes to reconciliation among all the communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

My delegation welcomes the appointment by the end of December 2019 of the new State-level Council of Ministers, following the 2018 elections. We note, however, that some cantonal Governments have yet to be appointed.

My delegation supports the efforts of the Office of the High Representative, in line with the Dayton Peace Agreement and relevant Security Council resolutions, and calls on all parties to make concerted efforts to implement the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With regard to the agenda of five objectives and two conditions for the closure of the Office High Representative, we encourage all parties to fulfil their commitments with a view to ensuring Bosnia and Herzegovina's full autonomy.

While the end of this year will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the report of the High Representative underlines that many issues remain unresolved. In this regard, we would like to express our concern over the continued rhetoric of incitement and divisive statements. We call on all political leaders to prioritize the national interest of all the citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina and pave the way for younger generations to build a better future based on ethnic and cultural unity. In this context, Tunisia expresses its full support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge all parties to take the necessary steps to strengthen the rule of law and to ensure the participation of young people and women in various level of the political processes.

The month of July 2020 will mark the anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, and we remain deeply concerned by the continued perpetration of genocide denial and appeal against the glorification and memorialization of war criminals.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its full support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to stabilize the country and promote reconciliation among its various ethnic groups, and stands ready to work with partners to support lasting peace and security and sustainable development.

Annex XIV

Statement by Mr. David Clay, Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

I thank you very much, Sir, and offer my thanks, too, to both our briefers this morning.

I would like to begin by thanking the High Representative and his team for this thorough report (S/2020/345, annex). While we would all prefer to see local actors taking responsibility to deliver a secure, peaceful and sustainable future for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Office of the High Representative continues to play an essential role. It has the United Kingdom's full support, including for the use of executive powers should the situation so require.

As the High Representative makes clear, Bosnia and Herzegovina, like nearly every other country, is battling the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We have been impressed with the discipline and solidarity shown by the authorities in undertaking this immense and ongoing task, and welcome the political and institutional leaders' sense of unity in tackling this common problem. We stand ready to support Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Office of the High Representative in this joint challenge.

Over the past six months, we have been pleased to see that the problems of blockages in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be overcome — first, with the long-awaited agreement in December last year to form a stable Government, one that will continue Bosnia and Herzegovina's cooperation with NATO; and secondly, with the groundbreaking agreement on socioeconomic reforms that will directly benefit all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's assistance.

The joint Presidency's agreement on 28 April on a process that leads to Bosnia and Herzegovina implementing the European Union (EU) opinions, recommendations on human rights, democratic values and the rule of law was a further demonstration of the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina can work towards a positive future.

All of those moves are important for advancing Bosnia and Herzegovina's prospects for a Euro-Atlantic future. We urge politicians to engage constructively in this process, which will achieve far more for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina than the unconstructive threats of a political blockade that we have recently seen in relation to foreign judges sitting on the Constitutional Court, a core Dayton institution. It is good to see that despite those threats the Court continues to function. Those threats merely make the ending of international supervision even harder. The United Kingdom underlines the importance of the Court and welcomes the arrival of the new judge, Angelika Nussberger, who will bring significant expertise.

We also urge leaders to use this moment of unity to complete the formation of the Council of Ministers and to convene the authorities at all other levels following the October 2018 elections.

Later this year, local elections were scheduled to take place. While we must see what is possible given the COVID-19 situation, let us not lose sight of the shameful fact that elections for the city of Mostar have not taken place since 2008 — as the High Representative has highlighted today — violating citizens' basic rights, as the European Court of Human Rights has said. As set out in the 28 April agreements, it is imperative that Bosnia and Herzegovina urgently take all necessary steps to ensure that the elections are held in Mostar this year.

By implementing the recommendations in the EU's opinion, Bosnia and Herzegovina has said that it would address all outstanding European Court of Human Rights judgments, most notably the *Sejdić-Finci* ruling, and ensure that all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens can exercise their fundamental democratic rights and participate equally in their country's future.

Rule-of-law reform is at the heart of this agreement, too. As Judge Priebe's report flags, it is essential that the problems be tackled and the fight against corruption continue. It is vital that politicians address this issue without further delay.

I would like to congratulate the Office of the High Representative on its work in Brčko District. Through its coordinated work with the international community, it has promoted good governance, infrastructure developments and private-sector growth. This is a good model for reform.

This year marks 25 years since the General Framework Agreement for Peace was signed, bringing to an end the hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate the United Kingdom's unwavering support for the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is important that Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community find ways to appropriately mark this anniversary and promote a safe and secure environment and a positive and prosperous future for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, for Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is important to find ways to revitalize and increase efforts to achieve the 5 plus 2 agenda.

This year is also the twenty-fifth anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica. We need to come together to remember the genocide and all victims of the horrific conflicts that occurred in the Balkans in the 1990s. We must ensure that nothing like it ever happens again. It is deeply concerning that the glorification of war criminals continues on all sides, which makes the prospect of lasting reconciliation even more elusive. It is unacceptable that individuals and sections of society, including politicians, continue to deny the genocide in Srebrenica despite its qualification as genocide by two international tribunals as well as domestic judicial bodies.

I should just like to briefly address the point raised by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation regarding United Kingdom archives. As the Permanent Representative mentioned, the United Kingdom National Archives recently released papers relating to Bosnia and Herzegovina dating back 25 years as part of the United Kingdom's ongoing commitment to transparency. The United Kingdom's committed position that genocide was committed in Srebrenica is unequivocal. The authoritative judgment on what happened in Srebrenica and elsewhere; the place to look is the rulings of the international courts. The International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 had thousands of witnesses, and the transcript extends to millions of pages.

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

In conclusion, the continued pursuit of narrow political interests by those in power and their reluctance to compromise has cost Bosnia and Herzegovina dearly. We hope that the recent developments can be a catalyst for a new approach.

The COVID-19 crisis is affecting us all. Bosnia and Herzegovina's responses are helping to mitigate the problems. Political leaders are now taking this opportunity

to move forward on reforms so that Bosnia and Herzegovina comes out of the crisis stronger, with the support of its partners. We call on Bosnia and Herzegovina's politicians to demonstrate their commitment to progress, to look forward and not backwards, and to act in order to provide the positive future that their citizens so very much deserve.

Annex XV**Statement by Mrs. Kelly Craft, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations**

It is really refreshing to hear all the comments about the youth, and it was really great to have this conversation this morning with Valentin, just to be able to discuss, personally, the youth and the importance of the movement and making certain that they, too, understand their engagement and their contribution to the future of the country. It was nice to hear the representatives of Indonesia and Germany talk about the importance of the youth, and I think that is, in any country, vitally important. Obviously, as Valentin and I discussed this morning, his representation for the international community is much appreciated and has made such a huge difference in the trajectory of the country. I personally offer him our gratitude from the Trump Administration.

The United States of America envisions a modern, multi-ethnic, stable and prosperous democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina — one that is responsible for its own destiny. Valentin's latest reports demonstrate that while there are encouraging signs, there is still much work to do — and that is another thing that he was very honest about this morning — whether it be to move the country forward from the 2018 general elections or prepare for the upcoming municipal elections.

Regardless of when those elections are called, institutional work can be done right now to ensure the transparent execution of elections. We strongly support his mandate under the Dayton Accords as the final authority on the civilian aspects of the Peace Agreement. Further, we commend the continued work of the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Operation Althea and its role in preserving a safe and secure environment.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, much like the rest of the world, has had to take extraordinary measures to combat and mitigate the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Political and institutional leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina have cooperated in the response efforts — proof that the Government can function and govern in a manner that serves the people when there is the will to do so. Efforts to combat the pandemic and mitigate its effects must continue to be well designed and precisely targeted, and they must fully adhere to the country's constitutional and legal framework.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders must take steps toward political reconciliation, and they must also implement long-overdue reforms, including ensuring fiscal sustainability, tackling corruption and addressing organized crime. We encourage the swift adoption of the State-level budget for 2020, as it remains a precondition for holding elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, elections that are currently slated for October. Should these elections be delayed due to the pandemic, we must not lose sight of the goal of free and fair elections that reflect the will of the people.

The United States objects in the strongest terms to the efforts undertaken by malign actors to exploit the political landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina for personal, political and financial gain. Nationalist leaders continue to deny war crimes and glorify convicted war criminals. Senior political figures and certain segments of society are increasingly challenging the rulings of international tribunals, which are charged with prosecuting serious violations of international humanitarian law. External actors continue to target Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and malevolent actors look to undermine State-level institutions. Those attitudes and actions pose a serious and credible threat to the prospects of lasting reconciliation in the country.

The Trump Administration is committed to assisting the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their pursuit of a more free, just and democratic society. Bosnia and Herzegovina must continue to stay the course towards European integration and trans-Atlantic cooperation. We look forward to the full satisfaction of previously agreed objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. These objectives can most assuredly be achieved, and in the process the security, the stability and the prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be greatly enhanced.

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

I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko for his report (S/2020/345, annex) and briefing. I welcome the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, as well as Ms. Irena Hasić, to our meeting.

My delegation welcomes the appointment of the new State-level Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are also encouraged to see that the country has been able to manage the extraordinary circumstances of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and bring it under relative control. Furthermore, the recent emergency assistance from the International Monetary Fund as well as other financial and material assistances at various levels from the international community will, hopefully, help Bosnia and Herzegovina meet the urgent needs that arise from the pandemic.

However, various dimensions of the country remain in difficulty. Politically, the picture shown to us by Mr. Inzko is a gloomy one, replete with divisive rhetoric and actions. Economically, the World Bank's spring 2020 *Western Balkans Regular Economic Report* showed that the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to enter a recession in 2020, with a drop of 3.2 per cent. Socially, since 2013 more than 200,000 people, about 60,000 in 2019 alone, have left Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On 14 December 25 years ago, the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina was signed. One day later, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1031 (1995), on the implementation of the Peace Agreement. People at that time must have been very eager to see a comprehensive settlement to bring the conflict to an end and to build a new society of peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, although a new generation of people was born, grew up, became adults and have probably begun to have children of their own, none of the objectives and conditions to build a resilient and united society for Bosnia and Herzegovina has been fully implemented. Unhealed pain from the past has divided people in the country and destroyed opportunities to bring peace and stability to the present.

We cannot afford to delay the implementation of the Peace Agreement for another generation. My delegation therefore would like to make the following recommendations.

First, we call on the leaders of the country as well as those of its entities and communities to give the issue of national harmony their utmost attention. Rather than divisive rhetoric and action, constructive dialogues must be promoted. The three ethnic groups should work together in a reconciliatory and forward-looking spirit to build a strong and united Government. In this process, young people must be recognized as key partners for positive change and promoters of peace and reconciliation.

Secondly, it is important for Bosnia and Herzegovina to focus on, among other things, the establishment of rule of law, public administration reform, economic development and its process of regional integration.

Thirdly, we encourage all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to fully live up to their commitments and obligations under the Peace Agreement, with due respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the long-term interest of all ethnic groups in the country.

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

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May and to wish you and your delegation every success. We also welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have taken note of his report on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina covering the period from 16 October 2019 through 15 April 2020 (S/2020/345, annex).

First, let me address the most urgent issue. The first cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Bosnia and Herzegovina were confirmed at the beginning of March. Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities responded very swiftly. Various urgent and necessary measures have been put in place to contain the spread of the virus, including declaring a state of emergency and setting mandatory quarantines. All resources at our disposal have been mobilized. Our hospitals and medical and other relevant institutions had to adapt overnight to these new and unforeseen circumstances. Doctors, nurses, first responders and many others are rising to the challenge, risking their lives in fighting this ferocious and highly contagious disease. We take this opportunity to thank all of them for their indispensable efforts and dedication. We would also like to thank our international partners for the valuable assistance and support that has been rendered in these difficult times for all humankind.

In addition to its impact on our health system, the pandemic has hit our vulnerable economy very hard. Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities have introduced some necessary measures to mitigate those negative effects. Some urgent financial packages have been created in order to help those suffering the most. These efforts will take time, and significant resources will be necessary to recover from the unprecedented situation caused by the virus, which has claimed so many human lives worldwide.

Lastly, we need the assistance of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other international financial institutions to overcome the negative economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that connection, the role of the United Nations, including through its country team, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, and UNICEF, will be indispensable.

Let me now turn to some points relating to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. The new Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina was appointed by the Parliamentary Assembly in December. The Council of Ministers has continued to cooperate with the entity Governments on issues related to European integration and on reform processes to stabilize the economy, increase the effectiveness of public administration and attract domestic and foreign investments in order to enable job creation. In November, the Government adopted a national reform plan that defines the country's future relations with the Atlantic alliance, a document that was subsequently submitted to NATO in order to implement the 2016 review.

The authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina are fully committed to overcoming the remaining challenges and implementing the necessary reforms for full-fledged integration into the European Union (EU). In that regard, we are grateful to the EU for actively supporting my country's European path. We urge the EU and its member States to maintain and intensify that support. For our part, we have redoubled our efforts in a number of relevant areas, including the implementation of the reform

agenda and socioeconomic reforms as a matter of priority. We affirm our unflagging determination to strengthen the rule of law and good governance in order to fulfil the EU requirements for obtaining candidacy status.

Most importantly, on 28 April the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina took a decisive step towards obtaining candidacy status and beginning membership negotiations with the European Union by adopting a plan for implementing the European Commission's 2019 recommendations.

The fostering of friendly and constructive cooperation among the countries of the region on issues of mutual interest remains a top priority of Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy. The cooperation of Western Balkan States within the framework of the Berlin process remains a key driver of their integration into the European Union and of regional stability.

Bosnia and Herzegovina plays an active role in regional initiatives through the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Western Balkans Fund and the Central European Initiative, to name a few. The construction of the Sarajevo-Belgrade highway is a good example of cooperation among three partner countries — Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to fulfil its international obligations with regard to countering terrorism and violent extremism. With the extensive support of the EU, Bosnia and Herzegovina took significant steps to strengthen the rule of law and fight against organized crime. EU experts have been working together with Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to implement the Action Plan on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period 2018-2022.

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

With regard to socioeconomic development, Bosnia and Herzegovina is continuing to develop a critical planning, monitoring and evaluation process that is fully in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that connection, let me express our gratitude to the United Nations country team in Bosnia and Herzegovina for its outstanding contributions and tireless efforts to assist our institutions in the implementation of a development agenda.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to one of the main concerns of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities — the issue of illegal migrants. The international migrant crisis continues to pose a substantial challenge to the States of the region and their economies. In the past year, my country has registered a significant increase of refugees and migrants on its territory, most of whom crossed the border illegally. Our institutions do not have the capacity to implement the necessary measures to curb the migrant crisis in accordance with the highest European and international standards.

Bearing in mind that lack of capacity and the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a final destination for migrants, our Government is in need of stronger international support, especially from the European Union, which is often the migrants' final destination. We are grateful to the European Commission for its financial support to bolster our authorities' migration and border-management capabilities, but for an effective response, our institutions need much more support from the European Union and United Nations agencies.

In these trying 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. We currently have approximately 45 people serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has endorsed the Secretary-General's call for an immediate global ceasefire of all conflicts worldwide in order to silence the guns, stop violence and raise voices for peace. At this very challenging time, there is nothing more important than an immediate ceasefire in all corners of the globe to reinforce diplomatic action, help create conditions for the delivery of life-saving aid and bring hope to some of the places that are most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to cooperate with United Nations Member States and the broader United Nations family on this most critical and pressing issue that the world is facing today.

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

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

At the outset, allow me to welcome High Representative Valentin Inzko. I thank him for his comprehensive briefing today on his Office's latest report (S/2020/345, annex).

Croatia fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU), and I would like to take this opportunity to make some remarks in my national capacity.

Croatia has consistently participated in these semi-annual Council debates on Bosnia and Herzegovina and we welcome — even more so in these unprecedented circumstances — this opportunity to discuss the situation in the country.

The unprecedented circumstances brought on by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) global pandemic is forcing the world of diplomacy and international politics to find new ways of doing things — some never tested — and to adjust its working methods in order not to lose sight of important strategic issues.

For us, the topic on the Council's agenda today is critical. We have stressed on many occasions the importance that Croatia attaches to the territorial integrity, stability, functionality and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. And, on many occasions and even in the worst of times, we have demonstrated that in word and deed.

Today, as we debate this issue in the Chamber, thanks to modern technology, another important debate for the future of the Western Balkans is taking place via video-conference — a summit of 27 EU and 6 Western Balkans leaders. Under the helm of the Croatian presidency of the Council of the EU, the EU-Western Balkans summit was to be held in Zagreb in May. As an in-person summit could not be organized due to restrictions introduced to fight the coronavirus pandemic, at the initiative of Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, EU leaders agreed that the EU-Western Balkans Zagreb summit would be held via video-conference, with the participation of all EU member States and the six Western Balkan countries.

Even in these extremely challenging times we are doing our best to support the Western Balkans. We are not losing focus or allowing important issues to be left unaddressed. Croatia, for its part, has provided its partners from the Western Balkans with an extraordinary opportunity. The holding of the EU-Western Balkans summit and the decision to open membership negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia speak volumes of Croatian engagement with the Western Balkans. We hope that the Zagreb summit will be a catalyst for encouraging Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal work on its EU agenda and related reforms.

A stable, peaceful and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina, progressing steadily along its path to EU membership in a country where constitutional equality among its three constituent peoples and the rights of all the citizens are guaranteed, can play a pivotal role in the stability of the Western Balkans, Europe and the world as a whole.

The political impasse in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the standstill in the formation of institutions after the October 2018 elections were finally resolved in December when the new Council of Ministers was formed. As the biggest supporter of the country's path to EU membership, Croatia welcomed that step in the hopes that it would untangle political knots and allow for much-needed reforms to be delivered.

Mr. Gordan Grlić Radman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Croatia, was the first foreign minister to travel to Sarajevo after the confirmation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's new Council of Ministers in December. In doing so, he expressed the support of Croatia and the European Union for the reform processes ahead. The Council of the EU also expressed its support for those reforms at the end of last year. In that connection, it is evident that Bosnia and Herzegovina will need to invest enormous efforts and undertake significant political, institutional and economic reforms.

Those complex reform processes must be homegrown and can be achieved only through a rational and inclusive internal consensus-based process in an environment of compromise and reconciliation. It must arise from agreement reached among the legitimate political representatives of all three constituent peoples, as set out in the Dayton-Paris Accords, and must be predicated on the principle of equality among them.

Bosnia and Herzegovina today needs far less divisive and inflammatory rhetoric and actions that trigger a spiral of distrust. Instead, it needs many more reforms aimed at strengthening institutions and their functionality, in general, and the rule of law and the judiciary, in particular.

Too often, policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the country itself have been limited to the two extremes of centralism or divisionism. The growing tendencies of unitary domination, on the one hand, and separatism, on the other, are both destructive for Bosnia and Herzegovina, its integrity, functionality and, as a result, its future.

In that regard, Croatia would like to echo the European Parliament's resolutions on the country's progress in 2015, 2016 and 2017. They note that Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be a successful candidate for EU membership until appropriate institutional conditions have been established on the basis of the principles of federalism, decentralization and legitimate representation.

In the long-term, citizens are fleeing to European countries due to political apathy, as they cannot adequately participate in political and social processes. That problem is exacerbated by the poor economic situation and overall lack of perspective. People today — especially young and educated people — are voting with their feet.

The last general elections, in autumn 2018, were held without prior changes to the provisions of the Election Law, which Bosnia and Herzegovina's Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional. For the third time, the flawed Election Law allowed for majority constituent peoples to both elect their own candidate and to impose on the Croats a candidate of their choice to the country's collective Head of State, the three-member Presidency.

The Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina confirmed that legitimate and proportional representation of the three constituent peoples at all levels of Government is the basic principle enshrined in the country's Constitution, thus tasking the State Parliament to harmonize the Election Law with the Constitution. That was in 2016.

It is therefore of key importance to embark urgently, without further delay, on the reform of the election law, pursuant to the decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the *Ljubić* case and on the city of Mostar. Such a reform is needed in order to implement the decisions of the Constitutional Court, strengthen the rule of law and prevent future electoral engineering. That should enable the full implementation of the principle of equality of the three constituent

peoples — Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs — and their right to legitimate representation, which remains a key element of Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal political stability.

This is becoming an even more pressing issue with local elections taking place in the autumn, and it remains the basic precondition for accelerating progress towards a fully functional country focused on its future rather than its past.

Alongside these structural issues, Bosnia and Herzegovina also faces new challenges. The migration wave along the Western Balkan route and in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina increased significantly in 2019, and the EU's longest external land border is under significant pressure from illegal migration. On top of that, the COVID-19 pandemic represents an additional burden on the country's already scarce resources and limited capacities as it increases pressure on local communities and institutions and heightens political frictions and instabilities.

In the meanwhile, the Republic of Croatia has been providing ongoing technical, expert and financial assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Recently, the Croatian Government took two decisive measures to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in fighting COVID-19 and mitigating its consequences. In these challenging times for my country, as it is stricken with the pandemic and a devastating earthquake that caused severe damage to its capital, Zagreb, Croatia is contributing more than €5 million to Bosnia and Herzegovina's health-care system and is sending the country protective equipment to help prevent the spread of the virus.

Let me conclude by stressing that Croatia has always been ready to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina and remains its biggest supporter. We support it and help it on its path to EU integration, and help it fulfil all the requirements in that regard.

Reforms usually breed adversaries since they tackle narrow, specific interests. Fighting for a better past is useless and irrational. The one thing worth fighting for is a better future for all and the broader common good. We encourage our friend and neighbour to find the internal strength and wisdom to proceed, without delay, with a comprehensive set of reforms as a path towards a better tomorrow.

Annex XIX**Statement by Mr. Milan Milanović, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations**

I thank the High Representative for his briefing and the members of the Security Council and others for their statements.

Today's meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina takes place at a very challenging time as the international community is making enormous efforts to fight the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This difficult time provides an opportunity for us to demonstrate that by acting together, in solidarity and with cooperation, we can overcome the difficulties the world is facing at present. Before I proceed with my statement, however, I would first like to express my condolences and deep regret to the families that have lost their loved ones to this dangerous virus.

Our common fight against the pandemic has confirmed the importance of global and regional cooperation and of addressing the challenges that threaten development and stability, not only of our region, but also of the entire world. At these difficult times, we have witnessed remarkable friendship and solidarity between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and their citizens. In that context, let me mention the "green corridor" at the border crossing at Sremska Rača, opened in line with a decision of the Central European Free Trade Agreement Joint Committee to set up a faster system for the flow of goods among the countries of the region, including in particular humanitarian products.

Serbia has made every effort to send necessary assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, including medicine and protection equipment. Let me point out once again that my country intends to continue to provide necessary assistance and to express its solidarity with Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries in the region. Serbia continues to be firmly committed to promoting good-neighbourly relations, with the ultimate goal of overcoming the negative legacy of the past and of building a shared future based on the principles of mutual respect. By its constructive and active engagement within the regional framework and through regional initiatives and mechanisms, it is striving to make a positive contribution towards achieving common interests. In this way, my country has proven that sharing common values leads to the achievement of shared goals, particularly those that bring us closer to European Union membership. Serbia therefore strongly supports each and every step made by Bosnia and Herzegovina in that direction.

Serbia has invested much effort in stabilizing the situation in the region and will continue to do so in future. In that regard, respect for the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty, which form the basis of the international order, is of paramount importance. Serbia's position with regard to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is well known, often reiterated and absolutely indisputable. Serbia supports Bosnia and Herzegovina as one State with two entities — Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina — just as it supports all the decisions that the State makes in accordance with the competencies and agreements of its three constituent peoples: the Serbs, the Croats and the Bosniaks. Serbia will continue to develop good and active cooperation with both the central and entity authorities. We welcome the formation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's new institutions at the end of 2019 and the start of the work of the new Council of Ministers headed by Mr. Zoran Tegeltija.

As a guarantor of the Dayton Peace Agreement, Serbia wishes to point out that, 25 years after its signing, it is important to reaffirm the validity of the Agreement, which put an end to a civil war and provided the basis for stability in both Bosnia and

Herzegovina and the region as a whole. Accordingly, I would like to recall that the mechanism for a possible amendment of the Dayton Agreement is well known and implies consent by the two entities and the three constituent peoples. Insistence on or imposition of a solution either from within or outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina is unacceptable. We are convinced that a functioning Bosnia and Herzegovina is just as viable without changing the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the country, if attention is focused on a package of reforms needed to proceed with European integration that is backed by the consensus that already exists in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia unequivocally supports active dialogue to solve all outstanding issues within Bosnia and Herzegovina. It believes that all key decisions relevant for the country's future are to be taken following such dialogue and pursuant to agreements reached between the entities and among the three constituent peoples. We call on all actors to demonstrate the required level of responsibility and to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, mutual accusations and unilateral acts that are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Dayton Agreement. The Agreement came as a compromise and reflects a delicate balance, achieved the hard way, between opposing conceptions of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Subsequent attempts to favour any of the models proffered 25 years ago are not at all conducive to full and lasting stability in the country.

We also call on all actors involved in political processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as on the representatives of the international community, to demonstrate greater responsibility and forgo the rhetoric aimed at disqualifying other political actors, especially those elected legitimately in democratic elections. We believe that dialogue within the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only way forward in order to raise the level of trust and confidence and achieve a compromise solution for the future development of the country. As in the past, Serbia will continue to strive to make a maximally constructive contribution in that regard.

Strengthening regional cooperation by engaging in numerous activities and taking responsible positions in order to fulfil the justifiable expectations of all citizens continues to be the lasting commitment of my country. Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of Serbia's key regional partners. We welcome the economic progress being achieved in the region, which brings social development and well-being to all our citizens. As we did in the past, we shall continue to work with utmost dedication towards promoting regional cooperation.

Let me point out once again that Serbia is firmly committed to peace, stability and reconciliation. As I said at the beginning of my statement, the solidarity that is our reality in this time of the COVID-19 crisis should extend beyond the crisis. We believe that the policy of dialogue, good-neighbourliness and cooperation is second to none. Sadly, 25 long years after the end of the conflict, the devastation of the war has not been entirely overcome, as those who perished in it cannot be brought back to life. What we can and should do to restore confidence in our future, however, is to condemn all crimes and bring their perpetrators to justice, while paying our respects to and empathizing with all victims of the conflict, irrespective of their ethnicity or religion. Only in that way shall we make progress on the road towards economic and political stability, lasting reconciliation and shared prosperity.

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

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 27 member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, which is a member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

Let me first join others in thanking High Representative Valentin Inzko and reiterate the EU's continued support for his mission. I also thank Ms. Irena Hasić, Executive Director of Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for her briefing.

Like the rest of Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been severely affected by the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In these difficult times, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been able to count on EU solidarity in practical terms, including through the Union's immediate response — in the amount of €7 million — to the most urgent medical needs, through €73.5 million in mid- and long-term support for economic recovery and €250 million to support macrofinancial-assistance prospects, as well as through unprecedented access to EU civil-protection and health mechanisms and consular cooperation around the world. As we mourn all the victims, we also reflect on this concrete demonstration of the shared interests and common challenges that exist between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU.

Extraordinary measures taken to protect citizens and overcome the current COVID-19 crisis should be proportionate and temporary in nature and subject to regular scrutiny. They should also respect the principles of the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights.

In December 2019, the Council of the European Union reiterated its unequivocal commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country and welcomed the appointment of the Chair of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU urged executive and legislative bodies at all levels of Government to start addressing the key priorities identified in the European Commission opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union, in line with the legitimate aspirations of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance towards union with Europe.

We acknowledge that, in the current emergency situation, authorities in the country have stepped up their efforts to cooperate with each other, and we hope that this cooperation will continue once the present pandemic has been brought under control. We call on all political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to enable the State-level institutions to resume their work, particularly with regard to the implementation of the Commission opinion, following the recent decision by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today more than ever, we need counterparts with whom to engage concretely on the difficult reforms that are needed to advance towards EU membership. Beyond words, we now need tangible proof that Bosnia and Herzegovina is willing to do what it takes to become a member of the European Union.

We also reiterate our call on all political leaders to refrain from nationalist, divisive or provocative rhetoric. They should instead take concrete steps to promote an environment conducive to reconciliation in order to overcome the legacies of the war. Revisionism, in particular the minimization or denial of the Srebrenica genocide, especially this year, as we commemorate its twenty-fifth anniversary, as well as the

glorification of war criminals, contradicts the values of the European Union and is incompatible with the prospect of integration into the EU. The European project was built on reconciliation; Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions and leaders must therefore honour their commitment to sustainable reconciliation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been clear about its willingness to become a member of the European Union. The publication of the Commission opinion last May, with its key priorities covering the Copenhagen political criteria, demonstrates our strong commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina, provided it addresses the scope of reforms with determination.

The European Union strongly underlines the need for the country's authorities to work towards strengthening the rule of law, in particular the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, fighting corruption and organized crime, countering radicalization and tackling migration challenges while preserving access to asylum, guaranteeing the independence of the media and the safety of journalists, promoting youth employment and education and gender equality, and ensuring the full and effective implementation of socioeconomic reforms.

The European Union also reiterates that election-related issues, including provisions for holding local elections in Mostar and for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, should be addressed as a matter of urgency, taking into account the situation in the country and in line with European standards and decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European Union underlines that no legislative or political steps should be taken that would make the implementation of the European Court for Human Rights ruling in the Sejdić-Finci case, as well as related rulings, more challenging.

Lastly, with regard to the political and security situation on the ground and the importance of maintaining a safe and secure environment, the European Union reiterates its firm support for the European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council.
