



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Special Permanent Council Nr 1058 Vienna, 9 June 2015**

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#### **EU statement in Response to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, H.E. Igor Crnadak**

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Mr Foreign Minister, it is a great pleasure for the European Union to welcome you to the Permanent Council of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We congratulate you and Bosnia and Herzegovina for assuming the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for the first time since the accession of your country to the Council of Europe. We have listened with interest to your priorities and planned activities as Chair of the Committee of Ministers and we thank you for your presentation.

Mr Minister, your visit comes at a critical moment for the OSCE and European security as a whole. European security has been jeopardised over the past year following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and its actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine. The wider implications of Russia's violations of basic OSCE principles represent a significant challenge. What is at stake are the fundamental principles that have provided a solid cornerstone for our area in the last 40 years. It is important for the European Union, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe, which all have valuable expertise to offer, to achieve complementarity and synergy to avoid duplication in their contributions to the de-escalation of the crisis.

The Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe coincides with the OSCE Chairmanship of Serbia. This offers opportunities to further strengthen regional cooperation. The European Union welcomes the priorities of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and in particular the implementation of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. This is a very important issue. The OSCE decision on preventing and combating violence against women, adopted at last year's Ministerial Council, rightly recognises the importance of this Convention. We call on all participating

States to sign and ratify this Convention, and encourage the OSCE to support participating States in their efforts to implement it.

The EU also welcomes the attention paid by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Chairmanship to the Southern Neighbourhood. Security in Europe is closely linked to security in the Mediterranean area as a whole. Also within the OSCE, we are determined to adopt a comprehensive approach to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism, while upholding human rights, including the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, and the rule of law. Cooperation between our institutions could enhance the discussion and positively contribute to deal with these issues.

Mr. Minister, we welcome your invitation addressed to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović to visit Bosnia and Herzegovina in the near future to discuss issues related to the freedom of media and safety of journalists.

The OSCE and the Council of Europe share common values and principles. Bosnia and Herzegovina's Chairmanship of the Council of Europe provides an opportunity to build on existing efforts and strengthen cooperation on core issues of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and rule of law. Both at the political and strategic levels, between representatives of both organizations as well as among experts on the ground. We for instance welcome the ongoing joint work on combating trafficking in human beings, and in the field of election observation and assistance. We also welcome the work of the Council of Europe on counter-terrorism and the fight against cyber-crime. We likewise appreciate further cooperation in other areas where joint work has already proven productive, including freedom of media, human rights education, improving the situation of Roma and Sinti, and combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Mr Minister, 2015 is a year of anniversaries and honouring the past, honouring all the victims of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina including those of the Srebrenica genocide which was perpetrated twenty years ago. In this respect, we encourage the domestic judiciary to continue its efforts and guarantee justice, for the victims and their families. It is also a year of opportunities and looking to the future. In your statement, you addressed the recent positive developments in the relations of Bosnia

and Herzegovina with the European Union. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement, which entered into force on June 1st, is indeed a milestone on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU path. It deepens our political, economic and trade ties and prepares Bosnia and Herzegovina for EU membership. The positive momentum should be maintained for the fulfilment of the Bosnia and Herzegovina people's aspirations for EU membership. We are encouraged by the sustained commitment of the Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions and leadership. Nevertheless, finalisation and subsequent substantial progress in implementing an initial reform agenda will be crucial for viable development in the country and for a membership application to be considered by the EU.

Mr Minister, we thank you once again for sharing your views with us today. We look forward to continuing to work with your very able delegation here in Vienna, and we wish you every success in the future.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ICELAND+ and ALBANIA\*, the EFTA country LIECHTENSTEIN, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.