



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1514 Vienna, 27 March 2025

EU Statement in response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina Ambassador Brian Aggeler

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Aggeler to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report. Amid current geopolitical developments, the OSCE and its field operations continue to be imperative in promoting and safeguarding security and stability across the OSCE area.
2. The EU is unequivocally committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country. Following the decision of the European Council in March 2024 to open EU accession negotiations, we encourage all political actors to focus on the EU path, for the benefit of BiH citizens. The EU is seriously concerned about legislation and initiatives in the Republika Srpska entity that run counter to the EU path of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including secessionist rhetoric, questioning the constitutional order of the country, and threatening fundamental freedoms of its citizens. The EU urges all political actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from and renounce provocative divisive rhetoric and actions, including questioning the constitutional order, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the country, and to respect the principles of equality and non-discrimination of all citizens belonging to all constituent peoples and others.
3. We underline that the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the supreme law of the country, and its provisions must be fully complied with. Changes to entity constitutions, as well as the procedure for adopting these, must be fully in line with the principles enshrined in the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the existing constitutional framework, including the jurisprudence of the Constitutional

Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU also recalls that a number of Constitutional court decisions have yet to be fully enforced.

4. The EU commends the valuable work carried out by the Mission in a challenging environment and under budgetary constraints, and its cooperation and coordination with other relevant international stakeholders, including the EU Special Representative and the Office of the High Representative.
5. We praise the Mission's important contribution to electoral integrity during the 6 October 2024 local elections, including its support to the Central Election Commission through targeted training, capacity-building efforts, and pilot projects testing new election technology. In view of the 2026 general elections, we further encourage the support of the Mission of electoral reforms, voter education, and technical assistance to the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
6. With reference to the institutional mechanisms which were set by the Dayton Peace Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to undertake further constitutional and electoral reforms to ensure equality and non-discrimination of all citizens, notably by implementing the Sejdić-Finci case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The EU reiterates its call for an inclusive and locally owned process of limited constitutional and electoral reforms, through genuine dialogue and in line with European standards, to eliminate all forms of inequality and discrimination in the electoral process. The EU underlines that no legislative or political step should be taken that would make the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci ruling and related ECtHR rulings more challenging or would further deepen divisions.
7. We stress the importance of the Mission's engagement in all three dimensions, as well as on cross-dimensional issues, such as its work to advance gender equality and participation of youth. We encourage the Mission to continue mainstreaming a gender perspective in all its activities.
8. With regard to the First Dimension, we welcome the Mission's assistance in the development of a new BiH Integrated Border Management Strategy. In this context, we welcome the adoption of the Law on Border Control by the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina in January this year as a

significant step forward in strengthening the country's capacity to address security challenges and threats at its border, including cross-border crime and irregular migration. In addition, we welcome the Mission's efforts aimed at strengthening counterterrorism measures, police modernisation, combating organised crime, arms control, and improving cybersecurity.

9. In the Second Dimension, we appreciate the Mission's role in combatting corruption, as well as in the area of environmental governance, particularly in cross-entity co-operation on sustainability initiatives, including the development of energy efficiency plans for municipalities in the Majevisa region.
10. With regard to the Third Dimension, we commend the Mission's increased engagement in advancing fundamental freedoms, addressing key issues such as the 2023 reinstatement of defamation as a criminal offense and the introduction of 'foreign agents' legislation in the Republika Srpska entity. We further applaud the Mission's achievements in the area of the safety of journalists, including facilitating the appointment of 33 contact points within prosecutor's offices and police jurisdictions across the country, providing essential training and developing their terms of reference to better address journalist attacks. Additionally, we welcome the Mission's contributions to the adoption of human rights-compliant legislation on peaceful assembly in several Federation of BiH cantons. Nonetheless, we remain concerned about the continuing backsliding in fundamental freedoms, including legislative initiatives further shrinking the space for civil society and media, as recently highlighted by ODIHR and RFoM.
11. We highly value the Mission's continued engagement in the area of inclusive, non-discriminatory and high quality education, despite existing challenges. In this regard, we praise the Mission's tireless advocacy for quality education and inclusive curricula.
12. The EU encourages the Mission to pursue its efforts towards peace, trust building and reconciliation, which also include completing the first phase of the "Empowering Trust and Cohesion in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Communities" project, implemented in collaboration with the EU, the UN, and the Council of Europe. The EU-funded Možemo Bolje (We Can Do Better) project contributed to strengthening community ties by supporting diverse local groups. We encourage

all political actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina to overcome divisive rhetoric rooted in the past, to end the glorification of convicted war criminals, as well as to actively promote reconciliation.

13. In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our strong support for the Mission, and once again commend Ambassador Aggeler and his team's strong commitment to maintain the Mission's essential role in conflict prevention, democracy-building, and regional stability. Sustained financial and institutional support is crucial to ensure that the Mission is able to continue to deliver in the years ahead.

Albania, Armenia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.