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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 739th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

13 November 2008

On Bosnia and Herzegovina

The European Union (EU) would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the Conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of 10 November 2008 on the subject of the Western Balkans/Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Council expressed its full support for the HR/EUSR, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, and his efforts to ensure compliance with the Dayton/Paris agreements and progress with reform. The Council said that the signing of the SAA constituted an important milestone in the relationship between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union. However, the Council voiced its deep concern at recent developments in the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly the use of nationalist rhetoric and the implementation of unilateral decisions by some leaders, thereby jeopardising power sharing and the foundations of the state. Such words and deeds compromise the reforms required for the country's future. The Council took note of the letter signed by the Presidency, the SG/HR and the Enlargement Commissioner.

While reaffirming Bosnia and Herzegovina's European prospects, the Council called on the Bosnian authorities to shoulder their responsibilities, and to renew their efforts to push through the necessary reforms for Bosnia and Herzegovina to progress on the path towards the European Union. The Council noted with satisfaction the agreement along these lines between three of the main Bosnian parties. It called for these proposals to be rapidly put into concrete form and invited the Bosnian political forces to unite around this project.

The Council reiterated its support for the aim of transition from the Office of the High Representative to a stronger European Union presence. The Council also pointed out that the Peace Implementation Council had listed five objectives and two necessary conditions for closure of the High Representative's Office. The Council called on the Bosnian authorities to intensify their efforts to fulfil all those objectives and conditions.

The Council emphasised the European Union's renewed willingness to step up its involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to assume its responsibilities by making use of all the instruments at its disposal. The Council welcomed the joint report by the SG/HR and the Enlargement Commissioner concerning greater EU involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Council underlined that political developments would have to be taken into account in the future course of operation ALTHEA.”