

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council Nr 951  
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**EU statement in response to the OSCE Head of Mission in  
Bosnia and Herzegovina, H.E. Fletcher Burton**

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The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Burton back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his detailed report on the activities of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At their meeting in December last year, EU Foreign Ministers reiterated the EU's unequivocal support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as sovereign and united country enjoying full territorial integrity. While noting that some progress had been made including the formation of a State-level Council of Ministers, the Foreign Affairs Council regretted that momentum on the EU agenda has stalled and that the use of divisive rhetoric has continued.

Of key importance to the EU is the need for Bosnia and Herzegovina to bring its Constitution into compliance with the European Convention of Human Rights and in particular implementation of the Sejdic/Finci ruling, which is a pre-condition for the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU to enter into force and a basic requirement for a credible membership application of the country. We are disappointed that the local political leaders have preferred to pursue narrow party or ethnic interests rather than focusing on the overall interest of the country and its citizens. They have failed to date to show the necessary leadership and local ownership on this issue.

Against the continued political uncertainty in the country and the new dynamics in the region, we value highly the work carried out by the Mission. In particular, we appreciate the intensified endeavours of the Mission to increase the effectiveness of its work while preserving key activities and hope that this process will continue. We support the approach you have adopted, to reinforce positive change drawing on your unique field presence to promote early warning and conflict analysis, utilising your substantive expertise on issues such as refugee returns and war

crimes, establishing close working relationships with political leaders at all levels and working with other international organisations to ensure a coordinated approach.

We welcome the strong focus on regional cooperation in your report, echoing the foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina as emphasised by its Foreign Minister in his statement to the Dublin Ministerial in December last year. The EU too is committed to this approach. As we said in our response to the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council last week, we recognise the key role that regional cooperation plays in promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans.

We very much support therefore those activities of the Mission which promote regional solutions to shared challenges, including cooperation on the prosecution of war crimes cases, the development of parliamentary oversight systems, the launch of the Academy on Media Law in South East Europe, and support to the regional housing programme for displaced persons, bearing in mind the need to find durable solutions to the large-scale displacement of people which resulted from the conflicts in the 1990's. In particular, we would like to thank the Mission for its substantial contribution to the facilitation by the OSCE of balloting of the Serbian presidential and the parliamentary elections in Kosovo in May 2012.

We were glad to see that you have updated the Mission's Action Plan for the promotion of Gender Equality and agree very much with its priorities of assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet its obligations in promoting gender equality as well as promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the Mission's policies and programmes.

We support the Mission's key role in assisting the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the management of stockpiles of weapons and ammunition. We also support the work you are doing in the education sector, especially in addressing discrimination in schools and developing common learning standards and outcomes for all young people and would encourage further efforts in pursuit of these objectives. Similarly, while we appreciate your support for the action plans to improve the socio-economic and social inclusion of Roma, particularly

with regards to housing and education, this needs to be reinforced in order to address the significant challenges which remain in this sector.

We support your focus on the justice sector and your work on rule of law. We would wish to see a determined and sustained effort by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to tackle corruption and organised crime at all levels.

The EU shares the concern expressed last week about restriction of access by the NGO Centre for Civic Initiatives to observe sessions of the House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We fully support the engagement of the Mission in this case and we urge the House of Representatives to reverse its decision.

Seventeen years after the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement, significant challenges remain, including the need to tackle the backlog of some 1400 war crimes cases, for which the EU is providing financial support to the authorities. In addition to the €7.4m which has been allocated for this purpose, we are pleased to inform colleagues that the EU has ear-marked an extra-budgetary contribution of €1m to the Mission's war crimes monitoring project.

Looking ahead, we are pleased to see that the Mission has taken a strategic approach with the development of the "Dayton + 20" plan, based on the integration agendas and regional cooperation, which offers a framework for the Mission's activities up to 2015, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dayton settlement. This offers an excellent fit with the OSCE' Helsinki + 40 process and we would encourage other Field Missions to consider undertaking a similar strategic planning exercise.

In conclusion, with the accession of Croatia to the European Union on 1 July this year, the EU will have a shared border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. This will put the onus on the political leadership of the country to accelerate progress on the EU agenda so that it can catch up with other countries in the region. We are heartened to know that as we move forward we may continue to count on the excellent cooperation that exists on the ground between the EU and the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We thank Ambassador Burton and his able

team for your dedicated work and we look forward to your next appearance before the Permanent Council.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Albania, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

\* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia 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.