

Joint press statement following the third meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union

The Stabilisation and Association Council (SA Council) between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union (EU) held its third meeting on 13 July 2018. The SA Council welcomed Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country. It welcomed the finalisation of the country's first set of answers to the Commission's Opinion Questionnaire on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership application through the use of the coordination mechanism on EU matters.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership application of February 2016 represented a strategic commitment to advance towards the EU. The SA Council welcomed the adoption of EU-oriented reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina such as country-wide strategies for environment and rural development or excise duties, which guarantee the fiscal manoeuvre for other investment decisions. The SA Council encouraged Bosnia and Herzegovina to urgently translate its commitment into comprehensive reform results on the ground.

The SA Council took note of the announcement by the Central Election Commission of the general elections scheduled for 7 October 2018 and called on focusing on concrete needs of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the future of the country, during the election campaign. In this context, the SA Council encouraged all political leaders and parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to reach a compromise and find a domestic solution to address the Decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding elections to the Federation House of Peoples with a view to ensuring the smooth implementation of the October 2018 elections results.

The SA Council reiterated the need for Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt a new countrywide strategic framework for public administration reform, as well as a countrywide strategy on public financial management, among others as a pre-condition for accessing EU budget support in any sector.

The SA Council welcomed the adoption in November 2017 by the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC) of a detailed action plan to implement the European Commission's recommendations on issues within the HJPC remit. The SA Council noted that corruption in many areas continues to be a serious hindrance to socio-economic development of the country. The SA Council underlined the importance to address this issue with determination and to step up efforts to establish a track record of final convictions, including in organised crime cases, with particular focus on money-laundering.

The SA Council also positively noted the adoption of a new strategy on fighting organised crime and implementation of the action plan on anti-money

laundering and financing of terrorism. In this context, the SA Council welcomed the decision by the Financial Action Task Force to remove Bosnia and Herzegovina from its monitoring under its on-going anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) compliance process. The SA Council invited the competent authorities to amend without further delay the provisions of Bosnia and Herzegovina criminal procedure code on special investigative measures in line with international standards.

The SA Council welcomed the initiatives taken by Bosnia and Herzegovina to address counter-terrorism issues. The SA Council calls on the country's authorities to take further steps to prevent and fight radicalisation and financing of terrorism.

With respect to migration issues, the SA Council reiterated the importance of enhanced cooperation with the EU and neighbouring countries on border management issues and to improve cooperation between the relevant security agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The SA Council welcomed the start of negotiations on a Status Agreement with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCGA). The SA Council also welcomed the provision of emergency funding by the European Union and the additional measures under preparation.

In terms of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the SA Council called for an increased alignment with EU declarations and decisions of the Council of the EU.

The SA Council welcomed the efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to become actively engaged with EU crisis management operations. While the recent purchases of weapons remains a concern, the SA Council welcomed the cooperation of the all law enforcement agencies in providing information on the holdings of weapons and ammunitions to EUFOR.

The meeting was chaired by Dr. Denis ZVIZDIĆ, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who was accompanied by Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Finance and Treasury Mr. Vjekoslav BEVANDA and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Igor CRNADAK. The Delegation of the European Union was led by Ms Federica MOGHERINI, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission who was accompanied by Mr. Johannes HAHN, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations.

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