

Supporting the Office of the High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Thank you, Mr President. Thank you to Mr Legoc for your briefing, and welcome to the Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The role of the High Representative is vital, and has the UK's full support. The 5+2 objectives and conditions for closure of the office have not been met. These objectives and conditions were agreed by all Peace Implementation Council Steering Board members, and are recognised by the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities, and supported repeatedly by the Security Council, most recently in resolution 2549 adopted unanimously in November last year.

The absence of a High Representative at this stage would encourage further instability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, emboldening actors who wish to perpetuate divisions and slowing implementation of much needed reforms. This would have a negative impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region and would hinder continued implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

The Security Council should retain its focus on achieving sustainable peace and security, and supporting the Office of the High Representative until the aforementioned conditions for closing the Office have been met.

As stated in Dr Inzko's letter to the Secretary-General dated 3 June, subsequently circulated to Security Council members on 24 June, Mr Christian Schmidt has already been appointed by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board as the new High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. He will take up his duties on 1 August.

As a member of the Steering Board, we attended the meeting on 27 May, where he was appointed. The appointment was supported by all members of the Steering Board, except for Russia. Decisions of the Steering Board do not require unanimity. On the basis that there was "sufficient political support" in the Steering Board for Mr Schmidt, it was announced on 27 May that it had formally appointed him as the new High Representative. Legal advisers in the Office of the High Representative have confirmed this is the correct procedure.

It is not the case that the endorsement of the Security Council is required in order to finalise the appointment of Mr Schmidt. Pursuant to Annex 10 of the General Framework Agreement for Peace and Peace Implementation Conference Conclusions – specifically the 1996 Peace Implementation Conference Conclusions which state, "in the event of a vacancy, following consultation with members of the PIC, the Steering Board will designate a High Representative" – the decision on the appointment of a new High Representative sits with the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board. There is no determinative role for the UN Secretary-General or the UN

Security Council in the appointment process, and no legal requirement that the UN Security Council take action to confirm Mr Schmidt's designation. He will take up his duties as High Representative on 1 August, whether this Council welcomes the appointment, as it has done in the past via a resolution or exchange of letters, or not.

Thank you, Mr President.