

Urging meaningful progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Thank you, Mr President. I would also like to congratulate China on its assumption of the Security Council presidency and wish you all the best for the month. I should also like to thank and congratulate Vietnam on its excellent stewardship of the Council in April.

I add my thanks to the High Representative for his briefing and the latest comprehensive report.

As we have heard, like many other countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the grip of COVID-19 . Now, more than ever, is the time for political leaders across the country to come together to fight the pandemic, to lead the country in its recovery, and to take the necessary collective steps to ensure a future that benefits all citizens.

We urge all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to reinvigorate action to agree and implement required electoral and limited constitutional reforms.

There needs to be real political will and compromise from all sides in order to find a lasting solution. We urge the authorities to work closely with the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the Venice Commission. The authorities should redouble their efforts to address outstanding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, most notably the rulings in the Sejdic-Finci set of cases.

Successes are possible. We welcome the holding of local elections, especially those in Mostar – the first elections there for over 12 years. And we congratulate the Bosnia and Herzegovina Central Election Commission for successfully organising two consecutive elections under challenging circumstances.

We also congratulate the Office of the High Representative for its work in Brčko District, on good governance, infrastructure development and private sector growth.

What is not helpful, and indeed a real threat to peace and stability, is the current political rhetoric around the “peaceful dissolution” of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This poses a serious threat to peace and stability and as such undermine the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina need their political leaders and representatives to instead focus their efforts on urgently combating the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthening the rule of law, and implementing economic and other reforms that would move the country forward on its European path.

We reaffirm our unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single, sovereign state comprising two entities, in

which all three constituent peoples, others, and all citizens are equal.

The UK continues to support reconciliation efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans more widely, including through our project programming and our role in the Berlin Process and Peace Implementation Council.

We would like, once again, to remember the many thousands of victims, and acknowledge the suffering on all sides of the Balkans conflicts. It is only through meaningful reconciliation across communities that the painful legacies of the past can be overcome. We once again call for an end to the glorification of convicted war criminals and the denial of the Srebrenica genocide. This definition has been officially recognized by two international tribunals as well as domestic judicial bodies, and denial merely serves to reinforce the deep societal divisions which threaten to block Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress.

Finally, Mr President, as is clear from the High Representative's report, the international community's role remains vital. In particular, the Office of the High Representative continues to have an essential role in maintaining the civilian aspects of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, and its work is central to supporting action by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including through implementation of the 5+2 criteria, to create this future.

The Office of the High Representative, and its use of executive powers, should the situation require it, continues to have the UK's full support.

Thank you.