



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1099
Vienna, 5 May 2016**

**EU statement in Response to the Report of the Head of the
OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, H. E. Jonathan
Moore**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Ambassador Jonathan Moore, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the Permanent Council, and thank him for his comprehensive report on the Mission's activities.

We highly appreciate the Mission's activities and commend its contribution to improvements in a number of areas. Let me in particular mention the rule of law, election legislation reform, sustainable return of displaced people, the security sector including the disposal of surplus and stockpile management of weapons and ammunition and oversight of defense, security and intelligence, as well as gender equality. At the same time, we would also like to underline that attention of the Mission continues to be needed in the areas where substantial challenges for the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina still remain, such as the implementation of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy, implementation of constitutional court decisions, reform of the security sector, education, war crimes processing, fighting corruption, guaranteeing freedom of expression and media and safety of journalists, addressing the issue of foreign terrorist fighters, and combating hate crimes, extremism, and terrorism.

We commend the Mission for the implementation of a three-year reform strategy which was successfully completed last year and which brought large-scale restructuring and savings. In this respect, we would welcome more information on the evaluation of the Mission's performance within its new structure, including this year's changes in the Office of the Head of the Mission, and the Mission's reduced hub-based coverage in the field as well as on how enhanced media coverage has helped

the Mission deliver more tangible results, as highlighted in the Permanent Council report. Effective evaluation is essential for all field operations to ensure the efficient use of resources. We acknowledge the Mission's focus on results, follow-up and implementation of lessons learned, and we encourage more impact-based evaluation. We underline that under the new set-up, the Mission needs even more to prioritise in the future.

We welcome the Mission's continued emphasis on its field coverage which we see as a unique added value and key asset also vis-à-vis international partners on the ground. We encourage the Mission to preserve its flexibility and efficient use of its field offices network.

We welcome the Mission's intensified relationships with key domestic stakeholders on all levels and would be interested in more information on how this engagement has helped the Mission make concrete progress on its strategic goals, as outlined in the report. We encourage the Mission to maintain this high level of co-operation also in a view of upcoming local elections and the need for good communication and co-ordination between state and entity levels. The strengthened coordination with key international players and broader regional co-operation in relevant areas are also very much appreciated.

We continue to see education as a persistent challenge in Bosnia and Herzegovina and underline the importance of addressing segregation and discrimination. We encourage the Mission to stay focused on this issue. In light of the lack of progress in tackling the "2 schools under 1 roof" phenomena, how does the Mission propose to pursue work on this very problematic issue?

We welcome the Mission's contribution to the Counter Terrorism Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its overall increased engagement. One of the main challenges, which negatively affects many other areas, is the lack of co-ordination and information exchange between fragmented and frequently duplicated security authorities on different levels and we strongly encourage the Mission to provide assistance in this area, as well as co-ordinating closely with neighbouring OSCE Missions on sharing best practices. Newly emerging threats like foreign terrorist fighters, terrorism and violent extremism are a matter of increasing concern for all of us.

Freedom of the media remains a key element in the wider reform agenda. We condemn all attacks on journalists and political pressure on media outlets, and we value the positive role of the Mission and its co-operation with the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Mr. Chairman, we welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina's European Union aspirations. It has submitted its EU membership application in February this year. We would like to recall last year's December General Affairs Council's conclusions calling for continued implementation of the reforms in cooperation with civil society, meaningful progress in the implementation of the Reform Agenda as well as for the long overdue adaptation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. Functioning coordination mechanism on EU matters will be essential for meeting requirements of EU integration process as well. While there has been progress, more remains to be done. In that regard we welcome the Mission's efforts to map converging priorities with the Reform Agenda; as a result are there specific areas on which you will focus your efforts?

We note with concern that there have been major distractions on Bosnia and Herzegovina's reform path during the last year. While we welcome that the threatened referendum on the state-level judiciary is off the table now, we regret that the decision has not been formally withdrawn by the Republika Srpska's National Assembly. We reiterate that the holding of such a referendum would challenge the cohesion, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Issues related to the reform of the judiciary should continue to be addressed in the framework of the EU - Bosnia and Herzegovina structured dialogue of justice.

We encourage the Mission to help to maintain this momentum in reforms. We welcome the Mission's focus on strengthening democratic governance, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and social cohesion and its overall programmatic support to socio-economic reforms.

In conclusion, let me once again thank Ambassador Moore and wish him and his able team continued success in their work this year.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.