



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Statement delivered by

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Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the UN

Debate Bosnia and Herzegovina Security Council

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Mister President,

Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement to be made by the Delegation of the European Union.

I thank High Representative Mr. Valentin INZKO for his briefing and the valuable work he and his Office undertake. I also welcome Ms. Irena HASIC's briefing.

Mister President,

The recent COVID-19 outbreak has shown us how interdependent we are. We encourage political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue cooperating and coordinating their actions in the fight against this pandemic. We also call for full respect at all levels of the constitutional and legal framework, as well as adherence to international human rights law. It is essential that all political leaders practice good governance at a time when this is most needed, including by making the prevention of corruption a part of their response to the pandemic.

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not stand alone. The European Union has announced over €3.3 billion in EU financial support to its partners in the Western Balkans. The Union's commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina is a display of its firm belief that the country's future lies within the EU. The BiH Presidency's decision on the 28th of April to start a reform process on key priorities identified in the EU Commission's "Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU membership application". This is a welcome evolution. It is however crucial for this intention to be translated into policy soon. We underline the need for progress in matters of the rule of law and in the fight against corruption. The independence of the judiciary has to be guaranteed and strengthened, one of the aims being to reform the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council. We welcome the appointment of Ms. Angelika NUSSBERGER as international judge in the Constitutional Court of BiH.

In order to ensure the full exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, it is important that rulings of the European Court for Human Rights are fully complied with and in a timely manner. We regret that so far, the Bosnian authorities have failed to comply with the Sejdic-Finci ruling.

Mister President,

Ms. HASIC's briefing underlines the need for Bosnia and Herzegovina's population, and particularly its political elite, to deal with its past in order to come to a durable peace. We all know that no reconciliation is possible in BiH without sincere recognition of the crimes committed during the war, including the Srebrenica genocide almost 25 years ago. Revision or denial of war crimes, glorification of war criminals;... They all undermine this process. War criminals must be held accountable. Impunity is not acceptable.

Last week, Belgian young people pleaded in favour of having a voice in matters of Peace and Security. The inclusion of youth in transitional justice processes enhances their effectiveness. Ms. HASIC's stressed the need to invest in education to avoid a repetition of the past. A system created to overcome differences in an interim phase in 2002, has now become symbolic of how BiH's transition has not materialized. "The two schools under one roof policy" is an impediment to reconciliation. It prevents the development of a shared vision and understanding of the past, instils ethnic prejudice and reinforces mistrust. We can only add our voice to the calls of various international bodies and urge the relevant authorities to end discrimination and segregation in education. Schools are to promote tolerance and mutual understanding as a basis for well-functioning democratic societies.

I thank you.