

Statement by H.E. Mr. Sven Alkalaj, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the UN at the UNSC meeting on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

New York, 5 November 2019

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madame President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November, and to wish you and your delegation every success. We also welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have taken note of his report on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, covering the period from 16 April through 15 October 2019.

We welcome the unanimous adoption by the Security Council of the resolution extending the mandate of the European Union-led Operation Althea which has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for many years. It is important to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina as a host country has enjoyed respectable and fruitful cooperation with Operation Althea, particularly in the areas of capacity-building and the training of its armed forces.

Madame President,

BiH seek to play an unequivocally constructive role in the United Nations and other multilateral institutions, and we aspire unequivocally to membership in the EU, and bilateral partnerships with their individual member-states.

Having said that, I would like to inform you that the Presidency agreed on a number of issues, including BiH's path to EU accession, and the disposition of state property in Croatia and other issues.

Numerous challenges lie ahead on our path towards integration in European and Euro-Atlantic structures. However, our commitment and dedication to facing and overcoming those challenges remain.

The EU membership remains one of main strategic goals of Bosnia and Herzegovina and is a subject of focus by all political actors in the country.

The authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina are fully committed to overcome challenges and implement reforms required for full-fledged integration into the European Union (EU).

We have increased efforts in a number of areas relevant to achieving that goal, including the implementation of the reform agenda and socioeconomic reforms as a matter of priority, as well as our continuing determination to strengthen the rule of law and good governance.

The rule of law is extremely important for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as for any other country, that it establishes the principle of equality before the law for every citizen in the country, without exception

With regard to processing war crimes in domestic courts, we would like to reiterate that effective processing of all war crimes, regardless of the national or religious origin of the perpetrators and victims, is essential for reconciliation and long term stability.

The fostering of friendly and constructive cooperation among the countries of the region on issues of mutual interest remains a top priority of Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy.

Bosnia and Herzegovina plays an active role in regional initiatives through the South East Europe Cooperation Process, the Western Balkan Fund, Central European Initiative etc. The Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the participating countries of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) was held in Sarajevo on 8 and 9 July 2019. SEECP is one of the leading political formats for dialogue in the region.

Also, I would like to mention as a good example of regional cooperation the project of construction of Sarajevo-Belgrade highway in cooperation among three partner countries, namely: Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Madame President,

During the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina has continued to fulfil its international obligations with regard to countering terrorism and violent extremism. The framework action plan and the strategy for preventing and combating terrorism for the period from 2015 to 2020 are being implemented.

With regard to the economic situation, it is always important to emphasize that Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy, like those of other countries of the region, has been increasingly dependent on global economic performance.

We also need to emphasize that our focus and top priority in economic reform programmes remains the creation of a legal framework to improve the business environment and job creation for young people. Currently, the main concern is the significant outflow of young, skillful and educated people, which could have a very negative impact on future economic development. Massive investments in infrastructure, health care and education are needed to reverse that trend.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has also started a very important planning, monitoring and evaluation process in the field of social and economic development that is fully in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, BiH Voluntary National Review (VNR) was presented at High Level Political Forum in July 2019. Allow me also to express our gratitude to the UN country team in Bosnia and Herzegovina for its outstanding contribution and tireless efforts in assisting our institutions on development agenda.

Madame President,

I would like to draw your attention to the issue of illegal migrants. During the reporting period, Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced a significant increase in refugees and migrants on its territory, most of whom crossed the border illegally. In response, Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities have undertaken a set of comprehensive measures, including in the humanitarian and security areas.

In that context Bosnia and Herzegovina has been implementing its strategy in the area of migration and asylum, together with its plan of action for the period from 2016 to 2020.

Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to contribute actively to international peace and security by deploying its military and police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Currently, we have approximately forty-five personnel serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide.

Madam President,

In his report, High Representative Mr. Inzko notes that, in the face of significant obstacles posed to accomplishing his mission, he has declined to invoke fully the executive powers of his office. We realised that such approach can broaden confidence in his judgment for the benefit of BiH as a democratic nation, and for peace, stability, and security in the region.

Finally, we would like to express the readiness of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to continue their work in securing a better and prosperous future for its citizens, as well as our gratitude to our international partners for supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina on that path.

Thank you, Madam President.