



## **Remarks by HR and PDHR at a press conference following the session of the PIC Steering Board**

*Check against delivery.*

### **High Representative, Valentin Inzko**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon and welcome to today's press conference following the two-day session of the political directors of the PIC Steering Board.

As per our usual practice, my deputy and I will brief you on the content of the discussions we had over the last two days, and will answer questions that you may have.

Also, you will get your copies of the conclusions of the PIC Steering Board after we finish this press conference.

It is unfortunate that the Russian Federation was not able to join the Communique this time due to disagreement on certain issues, but I want to reiterate that the Russian Federation is a valued member of the PIC and that despite this fact, the international community remains united in its goal of encouraging a stable and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Maybe you will also remember that on 6 November there was a UN Security Council meeting in New York, and the Russian Federation supported the resolution which was adopted, among other issues, to extend the mandate of EUFOR and some other issues, such as support for the OHR.

You will remember that, when we met back in June, we spoke in length about preparations for the October elections. Now, as this session of the PIC Steering Board takes place after the elections, it was only logical that elections were again high on our discussion list.

Regrettably, the context has not changed much. Our meeting in June took place in the midst of polarizing rhetoric and a focus on divisive issues before the elections. Now we are in a situation when both the results of the general elections, and the positioning of political parties in the post-election period, have in many ways further complicated the political scene, not contributing to an atmosphere conducive to smooth government formation or a fundamental change in approach to get the country back on track.

Our colleagues from the OSCE provided the PIC Steering Board with their extensive and profound assessment and views related to the conduct of the elections. From what they told us – one conclusion is obvious: BiH needs to make necessary and urgent improvements in the election system, which will restore the public's trust in the transparency and integrity of the electoral process. Otherwise, participating in the elections will be less and less meaningful.

Of course, this will be possible only once the authorities are formed.

Formation of authorities is another topic that we discussed. As we have seen in the past, having in mind the additional steps required for the formation of authorities at the Federation and state levels, this process in Republika Srpska seems likely to be completed much faster, and I am congratulating the RS in this sense.

Unfortunately, the political parties have failed to reach an agreement to amend the electoral framework concerning the indirect election of delegates to the Federation House of Peoples. Without an agreed formula for electing the delegates to the Federation House of Peoples, the formation of authorities in the Federation will be hindered.

Based on previous practice, the formation of the Council of Ministers might also be delayed due to the difficulties to form the BiH House of Peoples.

As you follow the political developments in the country on daily basis, you are aware that this issue has continued to spark divisive rhetoric after the elections.

Numerous problems may arise from delays in the formation of the Federation and state authorities, including the suspension of budget payments, which would affect not only the institutions but all segments of the society. All this accentuates the urgency of overcoming the current deadlock.

The smooth and rapid formation of authorities at all levels is an absolute necessity, since citizens have voted to have functioning parliaments and governments, able to take decisions and address real problems, rather than just to debate about coalitions and positions.

In this vein, the PIC identified areas of priority for the new authorities. These are outlined in the Communique, and they include completing work on the EU Questionnaire, strengthening the rule of law and the fight against corruption, delivering on concrete socio-economic reforms, strengthening the business environment, and improving public services.

I will stop here and allow my Principal Deputy, Dennis Hearne, to brief you on some additional aspects of our meeting.

**PDHR, Dennis Hearne**

Thank you, High Representative and a warm welcome to all of you from me too.

As the High Representative has said, the focus of our discussion was on the implementation of election results. The PIC Steering Board encouraged BiH political and institutional leaders at relevant levels to engage, without further delay, in constructive dialogue, in a spirit of compromise, to enable the timely formation of functional legislative and executive authorities. Also, the PIC SB called upon them to refrain from blocking or obstructing the implementation of election results.

Political directors were also very clear in their demand to BiH political and institutional leaders to work towards dialogue and cooperation, free from divisive and irresponsible rhetoric, and conducive to stability and progress, in particular by taking concrete steps starting at the highest political levels towards reconciliation in BiH.

Once the authorities are formed, there is also the issue of unimplemented decisions of courts. In this regard, the

Political Directors highlighted the urgent need to implement the Sejdic-Finci and related decisions of the ECHR, and to finally resolve the impasse related to the electoral system in Mostar, where citizens have been unable to elect their local representatives for over a decade.

On the second day of our meeting, today, the political directors met officially with the three members of the newly inaugurated Presidency. After greeting the members of the PIC, the Chair of the Presidency chose to leave the meeting. The meeting was held in the presence of the BiH flag, which is in line with the relevant provisions of the Law on the Flag.

Also, part of our meeting today was dedicated to an open discussion among political directors about the anticipated challenges in the period ahead of us. While sometimes we have different opinions and different perspectives, we also have common goals of working for BiH.