



## **Joint statement by the ambassadors of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board\***

Recent moves by the Republika Srpska (RS) entity authorities to introduce a Law creating a parallel High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC) are a clear attempt by the entity to unilaterally assume the constitutional responsibilities of the State, which would represent a violation of the constitution and legal order of BiH

The adoption of an RS Law on HJPC would be incompatible with BiH's European integration process, constituting an unacceptable interference in the independence of the judiciary and signaling a backsliding of the whole country on European standards in rule of law. The implementation of the RS Law on HJPC would create an unconstitutional body, jeopardizing the fundamental legal rights of all BiH citizens, especially those who live in the RS.

The establishment in 2004 of a single, State-level HJPC was a pivotal reform in modernizing the BiH judiciary in accordance with European and international standards. The role of the State HJPC is to foster professionalism, transparency and efficiency in the judiciary while advancing impartial, independent, and effective administration of justice throughout the country.

A professional and independent judiciary, free from political pressure and influence, is key to developing a fair and democratic society. All authorities in BiH should advance decisively on reforms related to the rule of law and the fight against corruption, which are essential to regaining citizen trust and advancing the EU accession process.

The Peace Implementation Council Steering Board Ambassadors (SBA) urge the RS to abandon these unconstitutional moves that increase the scope for corruption and focus instead on improving the existing institutions in a constructive way. Specifically, the SBA encourages representatives elected from the RS to the BiH Parliament – and all other elected representatives – to adopt amendments to the BiH Law on the HJPC in line with European Commission recommendations. The amendments will strengthen the integrity and improve transparency of the judiciary. Working towards improving the BiH HJPC would best serve the needs of all citizens in line with the 14 Key priorities of the Commission Opinion on BiH's application for EU membership.

The High Representative and SBA will not allow any actors to undermine the DPA. The SBA will take necessary responses in coordination with the High Representative, taking into account his competences and instruments to ensure the full respect of the DPA and the sovereignty and integrity of BiH.

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*\* The Russian Federation does not join this Statement*