

Statement by Ambassadors of Peace Implementation Council Steering Board *

Ambassadors of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board except Russia reiterate their unequivocal support to all BiH judicial institutions and underscore that a professional, impartial, independent and accountable justice system is fundamental to the entrenchment of the rule of law in the country, which is an essential element of a functioning democracy.

Expressing concern regarding ongoing attempts to undermine the effective functioning of the judiciary and in particular the state level judicial institutions, the undersigned PIC Steering Board Ambassadors call upon all authorities in BiH to refrain from actions or statements that could result in the politicization of the concept of justice, and provide every support necessary to further strengthen the state level judiciary and to reaffirm its credibility in the eyes of the citizens.

The undersigned PIC Steering Board Ambassadors regard the EU-BiH Structured Dialogue on Justice initiated in June 2011 as the only viable forum to bring BiH's justice system in line with the EU *acquis* with a view to secure a more effective, streamlined and consolidated functioning of the existing judicial system and all its institutions, and to allow for a smooth progress in the EU agenda once the membership negotiations start.

The undersigned PIC Steering Board Ambassadors also encourage the signing of a protocol on exchange of information and evidence in war crimes cases between the Prosecutor's office of BiH and the War Crimes Prosecutor's office of Serbia. Concluding a protocol would also help advance regional cooperation, trust and reconciliation.

* The Peace Implementation Council Steering Board members that subscribed to this statement are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States, the European Union, Turkey (representing the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation), Spain and Netherlands.