



## **Statement of the Ambassadors of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board and the Board of Principals\* on the COVID-19 situation in BiH**

The current situation with COVID-19 in Bosnia and Herzegovina is deteriorating, causing immense strain on the healthcare system. The number of COVID-19 cases and deaths, unfortunately, keeps growing.

The stress and anxiety of the people are completely understandable. In this regard, it is useful to remind of the 25 March 2020 joint call of the BiH Presidency for all citizens to fully respect the epidemiological guidelines, measures and recommendations so that every citizen can act responsibly in regard to their own safety and for the safety of their community. A coherent and coordinated public health and socio-economic response across the country would maximize the impact of the measures and help control transmission, relieve pressure on the healthcare system and ultimately save lives while sustaining the economy. This is as equally important as the safe roll-out of vaccines.

While responsibility for dealing with the pandemic must rest with the authorities, the International Community in BiH is supporting all efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 and help BiH alleviate the situation.

Especially, the International Community highly appreciates the continuous efforts and dedication of all the medical staff in BiH to control COVID-19.

What we all need now is resilience and unity. We urge political actors to refrain from accusations and politicizing the issue of vaccines. As vaccines have started to arrive in-country, the support and advocacy of political authorities in the rollout and in the uptake of available vaccines will be essential. This needs to go hand in hand with other public health and social measures and no one should be left behind. The virus is poisoning bodies. Don't let inflammatory rhetoric poison minds.

The International Community is committed to working with Bosnia and Herzegovina to help protect the health, safety and wellbeing of the people and it will continue to support all vital efforts in this regard. Hopefully, together we will overcome this disaster as fast as possible.

*\* The members of the Board of Principals joining this statement are: The Council of Europe, the European Union, EUFOR, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Sweden, and Switzerland, and United Nations in BiH.*