



Communiqué of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council*

The Peace Implementation Council Steering Board (PIC SB) Political Directors met in Sarajevo on 7-8 December 2021 to review the process of implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), which remains the basis for a stable, secure and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The PIC SB reminded all parties of their obligation to comply fully with the GFAP, all its annexes, and decisions of the High Representative. It reaffirmed its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity and fundamental structure of BiH as a single, sovereign state comprising two entities. The PIC SB restated that the entities have no right to secede from BiH and only exist legally by virtue of the BiH Constitution. The PIC SB reminded authorities in BiH that the BiH Constitution is an integral part of the GFAP and that the decisions of the BiH Constitutional Court are final and binding and must be implemented. The PIC SB reiterated its full support for the High Representative in ensuring complete respect for the GFAP and carrying out his mandate under Annex 10 and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, which remains unchanged. It underlined that the International Community retains the necessary instruments to uphold the GFAP. The PIC SB emphasized the need to fully implement the 5+2 agenda, which remains necessary for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

The PIC SB deplores the actions taken by the ruling coalition in the Republika Srpska, which seriously challenge the Dayton framework and damage stability in BiH and the region. The authorities in the Republika Srpska have also announced measures that – if followed through – would roll back 26 years of peace implementation reforms, also important for the EU accession process. The PIC SB warns that the Republika Srpska National Assembly's adoption of the *Law on Non-Applicability of the Decision of the High Representative Enacting the Law on Amendment to the BiH Criminal Code* constitutes violations of both Annex 4 and Annex 10 of the GFAP. In addition, the adoption of the *Law on Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices* not only challenges Annex 4, hinders effective reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also takes BiH further away from compliance with the EU standards, including having a single economic space.

Regarding the announcement of measures to unilaterally withdraw the Republika Srpska from agreements on the

transfer of competences to the State in the fields of defence, indirect taxation and the judiciary, among others, the PIC SB underlined there can be no unilateral withdrawal from transfer agreements from the entities to the State. The PIC SB shares the concerns raised by the IMF and World Bank on the serious consequences for government budgets, access to financing, and foreign assistance projects by such actions. Actions taken by any party to undermine the GFAP will bear consequences.

In light of these developments, the PIC SB reiterated its full support to and commitment to close cooperation with the High Representative in exercising his crucial mandate and to his executive powers, and welcomes his engagement with the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina in fulfilling the 5+2 Agenda, including the formation of the working group on State and Defence Property.

The PIC SB reiterated that any undermining of state institutions, or attempts to reduce the functionality of these institutions, affects the stability of BiH, as well as its entities and Brčko District. The PIC SB encourages all leaders to build an atmosphere of mutual trust and to engage in dialogue, including by immediately abandoning divisive and escalatory rhetoric, and destabilizing political actions or decisions, which create distress among citizens and undermine peace and stability in the country and the entire region. The PIC SB further called on all elected and appointed representatives from the Republika Srpska to return to the State-level institutions without further delay, and to engage on the reforms necessary to move Bosnia and Herzegovina forward, including on its Euro-Atlantic path.

The PIC SB likewise called on all political leaders to root out corruption which severely undermines institutions, hinders development, and drives the outflow of people, especially youth, from BiH. Another election cycle must not go by without increased integrity and fairness of the electoral process, and without equal opportunities for all citizens to run for this country's highest offices. The PIC SB expressed its full support to ongoing efforts on constitutional and electoral reform. Additionally, the PIC SB called upon Federation entity parties to restore trust, eliminate dysfunction and fully implement the 2018 election results.

The PIC SB will hold its next regular meeting on 7-8 June 2022.

* The Russian Federation did not participate in the 7-8 December 2021 PIC Steering Board Political Directors' Meeting, and therefore did not join this Communiqué.