

EU Statement on Bosnia-Herzegovina

CONSEIL PERMANENT N° 361 DU 18 OCTOBRE 2001

The European Union is pleased to welcome High Representative Petritsch and ambassador Beecroft to the Permanent Council. Their joint appearance bears witness to the continued good co-operation between the two institutions; a co-operation which remains essential for the success of the international community's effort in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The EU has taken note of the High Representatives assessment of the present political and economic state of play in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We support the work of the High Representative in creating a single economic space and building state institutions. As we have repeatedly stated, Bosnia-Herzegovina can only move towards Europe in the framework of a unified state, and in this context we also stress the urgent need to implement the remaining steps of the EU Road Map. The adoption of the long-overdue election law in August was one such step, but the authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina need to follow up by implementing the law, including through the appointment of members of the Election Commission.

The EU welcomes the formalisation of the partnership approach through the High Representative's establishment of a Consultative Partnership Forum. It is, however, only if the Bosnia-Herzegovina authorities show the necessary commitment and dedication to the reform process, that such structures will have any real value.

Restoration of the civil society and developing a sense of ownership should be a major target.

The EU has listened with interest to the High Representative's report on the continuing efforts to secure refugee return. We strongly support the common approach of the international community through the Reconstruction and Return Task Force. On the issue of refugee return, the EU also wishes to commend ambassador Beecroft and the OSCE Heads of Mission in FRY and Croatia for their proposal for elaborating a Framework for Common Principles for regional refugee return. The EU has repeatedly supported a strengthened regional approach to a broad range of issues, including refugee return. Bringing the national authorities to participate and contribute to this new initiative is crucial for its success, and we look forward to continued reporting by the missions on the development of this and other regional initiatives. The EU underscores that creating an environment conducive to return includes bringing war criminals to justice, and in this context calls for the full co-operation with ICTY.

The EU agrees with the mission's focus on youth within the Democratisation Program. We specifically support the idea of developing youth policy and initiatives in the context of regional and European initiatives, and call on the Mission to consider possibilities for co-operation with EU youth programs. Ambassador Beecroft has also touched upon the mission's work on reducing military expenditure of Bosnia-Herzegovina and securing the complete audit of military expenditure in both entities. We wholeheartedly support these efforts, and in this context welcome the mission's recent initiative on creating public awareness of the excessive levels of military expenditure in relation to GDP.

Concerning public information the EU encourages the initiatives of the International Community towards promoting independent public broadcasting.

Finally, regarding the issue of streamlining, we listened with interest to the briefing yesterday by Deputy High Representative Hays and ambassador Beecroft. The EU commends both organizations for their sustained efforts aimed at elaborating a comprehensive plan for optimising the effectiveness and co-ordination of the international community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and look forward to the High Representative's presentation of his plan by the end of the year.

Specifically on the likelihood of the UNMIBH (IPTF) police mandate could come to an end late 2002, the EU agrees that there is a need to establish precisely what the future tasks in the field of policing will be, to find an answer to the question of who should succeed the IPTF, and to do this in time to secure a smooth and comprehensive transition.

The associated countries, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Turkey subscribe to this statement.