

Communiqué of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council



Emphasizing that the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) remains the basis for a stable, secure and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board (PIC SB) reminds all parties of their obligation to comply fully with the GFAP, all its annexes, and decisions of the High Representative. It reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity and fundamental structure of BiH as a single, sovereign state comprising two entities. The PIC SB restates that the entities have no right to secede from BiH and only exist legally by virtue of the BiH Constitution. The PIC SB reminds 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 reiterates 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 underlines that the International Community retains the necessary instruments to uphold the GFAP. The PIC SB emphasizes the need to fully implement the 5+2 Agenda, which remains necessary for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

The Peace Implementation Council Steering Board (PIC SB) Political Directors met on 19 and 20 June 2024 in Sarajevo to assess developments relevant to the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The two-day session focused on the key opportunities and challenges facing BiH.

The PIC SB welcomes the decision of the European Council of 21 March 2024 to open accession negotiations with BiH, which is a historic moment for the country and all its citizens. The PIC SB invites all BiH institutions and political actors to seize this opportunity by working together to take all relevant steps to strengthen democracy, entrench the rule of law, guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms, and combat pervasive corruption.

The PIC SB expects BiH authorities to adopt the State budget for 2024 without further delay, which must adequately support the ability of all State institutions to properly function and meet their constitutional and legal obligations, including those stemming from Euro-Atlantic integration processes.

The PIC SB stresses that fair and transparent elections are essential for a functional democracy and urges all stakeholders in BiH to ensure the unimpeded conduct of the 6 October 2024 local elections. The PIC SB encourages the citizens of BiH to exercise their constitutional and democratic right to vote in the elections, which should take place with enhanced transparency and integrity. The PIC SB welcomed the presentation by Dr. Irena Hadziabdic, President of the BiH Central Election Commission, on the status of preparations for the local elections and commends the activities of, and reiterates its strong support for, the BiH Central Election Commission. The PIC SB was briefed by the EU, OSCE, and the USA on pilot projects, which aim to improve the integrity and efficiency of the electoral process.

The PIC SB discussed the general political environment in BiH

with a briefing from RS Vice President Ćamil Duraković on recent developments in the RS entity, including the current situation in Srebrenica.

The PIC SB strongly condemns flagrant attacks by the Republika Srpska (RS) ruling coalition against the GFAP, the constitutional and legal order of BiH, and its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Sovereignty resides in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single state, with its territorial integrity guaranteed by the GFAP. The entities within Bosnia and Herzegovina are not states; they exist solely by virtue of the BiH Constitution and lack any sovereignty of their own. Therefore, the PIC SB calls upon the RS ruling coalition to cease all actions that undermine the State, its authorities, and its multi-ethnic character. The PIC SB reiterated that the international community retains the necessary instruments to uphold the GFAP.

The PIC SB further clarifies that the Republika Srpska is not a signatory to the General Framework Agreement for Peace. The parties to the Agreement have committed to fully respect the sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to fully respect and promote the fulfillment of the commitments made in the annexes to the GFAP, including its constitution.

The PIC SB acknowledges the withdrawal of the Draft Law on the Special Register and the Transparency of Work of Non-Profit Organizations from the RS National Assembly and laments the chilling effect and damage this draft law has already done to the civic space, freedom of association, and freedom of expression. The PIC SB further urges RS authorities to reverse the decision to criminalize defamation and calls upon them to cease all actions that endanger political pluralism, media freedom, freedom of speech, and the space for civil society, and stigmatize minorities. These actions have no place in a democratic society and contradict the repeated commitments of the RS leadership to advance the whole country towards

European integration.

The PIC SB urges the FBiH authorities to swiftly proceed with pending appointments to the Federation Constitutional Court and to regulatory bodies, and to adopt and implement legislation that ensures greater transparency and integrity of public office, combats corruption, and supports economic growth. Such steps are necessary to continue to improve the entity's functionality.

The PIC SB strongly condemns the unprecedented pressures on the judiciary, in particular the BiH Constitutional Court. It reminds the RS institutions that the decisions of the BiH Constitutional Court are final and binding, and that the entities are obliged to fully comply with the Constitution and with the decisions of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The PIC SB welcomes the appointment of a judge to the BiH Constitutional Court by the FBiH House of Representatives and calls on the RS National Assembly to swiftly appoint two judges and restore the full composition of the BiH Constitutional Court to ensure its effective functioning.

Furthermore, attacks against the High Representative and the undermining of his activities gravely affect the implementation of civilian aspects of the GFAP. The PIC SB urges an immediate reversal of the RS policy of non-recognition of and non-cooperation with the High Representative. The PIC SB warns that upholding the GFAP is an obligation and expects the RS authorities to engage constructively with the High Representative.

The PIC SB encourages domestic stakeholders to engage constructively in finding an acceptable and sustainable resolution to the issue of State Property, a key element of the 5+2 Agenda. The lack of resolution of this issue seriously affects investments and economic growth of the country.

On 23 May, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the *Resolution on the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica*. The PIC SB urges all public officials in BiH to end genocide denial and work together to build trust and understanding in the interest of the stability, peace, and prosperity of BiH.

The PIC SB encourages all parties to promote an environment conducive to reconciliation, which can only be built upon truth, peace, and justice. All political leaders in BiH have the responsibility to lead this process, one which is based on dialogue and mutual respect. This requires accepting and acknowledging the facts, teaching the truth to future generations, honoring and remembering all victims regardless of their ethnicity, working to locate, recover, and identify the missing, and investigating and prosecuting the suspects who remain at large. Dialogue and trust are prerequisites for the stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as for sustainable economic development.

The PIC SB commends the efforts of Mr. Jonathan Mennuti, the Principal Deputy High Representative (PDHR) and Brčko District Supervisor, in working with the Steering Board members to uphold the Dayton Peace Accords, advance the 5+2 Agenda, and create dynamic reforms in Brčko District. The PIC SB welcomes Mr. Louis Crishock, who will assume the role of PDHR and Brčko District Supervisor.

The PIC SB will hold its next regular meeting on 3-4 December 2024.