Speech by High Representative Valentin Inzko to the UN Security Council

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Mister President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present my seventh report as High Representative and the 41st report by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina altogether.

These days are special for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it will celebrate 20 years since its admission as a member state to the United Nations, along with Croatia and Slovenia, on 22 May.

But these days are also special for my home country Austria as it was presiding the Security Council in the month of May, exactly 20 years ago.

The then Austrian Ambassador Dr. Peter Hohenfellner, as President of the Security Council, on 20 May 1992 proposed to this body to adopt a Decision recommending to the General Assembly that Bosnia Herzegovina be admitted to the United Nations.

At the same meeting the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution Nr. 755 (1992) endorsing this recommendation.

The Security Council President, Dr. Peter Hohenfellner, also expressed in a prophetic way that “All members of the Council are confident, that Bosnia and Herzegovina will make a significant contribution to the work of the organisation”.

Upon this historic recommendation, Bosnia Herzegovina was admitted with General Assembly Resolution Nr. 46/237 without vote, 20 years ago, on 22 May 1992 as a member of the United Nations.

I wish to use this occasion to congratulate Bosnia Herzegovina wholeheartedly and I am very glad that – as predicted 20 years ago – Bosnia and Herzegovina is indeed making a significant contribution to the work of the organisation, most recently with its successful tenure as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

I also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate both Croatia and Slovenia on this occasion. In Slovenia the date of admission to the UN is even commemorated as the "Day of Slovenian Diplomacy."

Such anniversaries are a time for reflection. Looking back, nobody can dispute that Bosnia and Herzegovina has come a long way. But neither can we dispute that the country has some way to go before the job is completed.

At the same time, I am very pleased to be able to report to you that 2012 has started well, with signs of positive change in the country.

Allow me to brief you on the most notable positive developments of recent months, developments which I believe offer real hope that 2012 can be a good year for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On 10 February – more than 16 months after the elections – a state government was finally appointed with a Croat Chairman. The government is based on a coalition of the six strongest parties.

I was especially pleased by this outcome as I have consistently and repeatedly insisted that the principle of rotation of the ethnicity of the state Prime Minister –

between mandates – be respected. Accordingly, we now have a Prime Minister who is from the constituent people of the Croats. And, by the way, his mandate is off to an excellent start. Had the authorities not followed the principle of rotation this time, it would be very difficult to re-establish what is for Bosnia and Herzegovina a very important procedure.

Furthermore, I have equally consistently and repeatedly advocated that the six parties forming the Council of Ministers – given the support they received at the elections – have the greatest responsibility for forming the government and taking the country forward. I have encouraged the parties to do so, but I made it equally clear that it is up to them to form a government and that the international community would not intervene.

Government formation was preceded by the adoption of two long outstanding State-level laws – a Law on State Aid and the Law on Census, both of which are important for the EU accession process.

Then, on 9 March, the leaders of the six leading parties reached a political agreement on two of the issues which have been identified as preconditions for the closure of my Office, the issue of ownership and use of military property and the broader question of ownership and use of state property. Overall, the 9 March party leaders' agreement is a positive step and offers real hope of progress.

Most significantly, progress on the issue of military property would help set the stage for Bosnia and Herzegovina's full participation in NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) – a step I have consistently and strongly supported. I hope that in a few days time there will be good news from the Chicago Summit. This would be a real boost for Bosnia and Herzegovina – a signal to the country that progress on the Euro-Atlantic path is achievable.

Of course, the benchmark is implementation. What we need to see now is action by the state and entity authorities to implement their agreement.

In addition to the progress on defence and state property, the PIC Steering Board is currently discussing the future of the international supervisory regime in the Brcko District. This question is another one of the five objectives and two conditions set for OHR closure.

My Office will be encouraging and supporting the domestic authorities to make progress, but I will not do the job for them. Those times are over. Progress can only be delivered by domestic institutions.

This also applies to implementation of the Sejdic-Finci judgement of the European Court of Human Rights that requires Bosnia and Herzegovina to change the way its Presidency Members and Delegates in the House of Peoples are elected. Progress on this issue is important for Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU path, but first and foremost it is important in and of itself, because Human Rights and the Rule of Law matter. Let me take this opportunity to once again call on the leaders to go the extra mile and to reach an agreement.

All the positive developments that I have just mentioned are the result of politicians finally sitting down and talking to each other.

So simple and yet so elusive.

At the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to benefit from a positive regional climate, to which President Josipovic and Foreign Minister Pusic of Croatia, as well as President Tadic of Serbia, have contributed to greatly. The role of Montenegro in this improved regional environment also has been extremely constructive.

So now, within Bosnia and Herzegovina – for the first time in

a long time – we have a political process based on dialogue and a readiness to compromise. This long overdue return to political dialogue, negotiation and compromise is very good news. If it is nurtured and developed – if Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders meet the commitments they have made – 2012 could indeed be a breakthrough year on the path towards full Euro-Atlantic integration. In any case it has started as a very promising year.

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At the same time, given my mandate, I must also be on the record in regards to less welcome developments.

In parallel to this positive dynamic we continue to see a parallel dynamic of the divisive political agendas that have been played out **over the last**six years. A number of troubling challenges to the Dayton Agreement and BiH's territorial integrity have taken place during the reporting period, including a series of statements challenging the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina. You can find relevant quotations and details of these developments in my report.

These are unwelcome aspects of an otherwise positive political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and we must keep them in view. Given my mandate, I must take these challenges seriously.

Another issue I am watching closely is the issue of the State budget. The 2011 State budget was not adopted until 2012 and we still await the adoption of the 2012 budget and a global fiscal framework for 2012-14. The 2012 budget has now passed the first reading in the BiH House of Representatives. I warmly welcome this step and I am hopeful that the parliament will finish the job swiftly, so that we can finally have a budget in place at state level. It remains to be seen how the budget, which is smaller than the last regular budget, adopted for 2010, will impact on the functioning of the State-level

institutions. We hope however that the basic functions of the state, including those relevant for the country's EU and NATO perspectives can be maintained.

2012 is an election year and this will bring challenges of its own. The electoral rules for Mostar and Srebrenica have been hotly debated and may very well shape the election campaign. Both places are special and deserve our ongoing attention. My office will certainly be making an extra effort in 2012 to help both communities to make progress in the interests of the citizens who live there and to contribute to the creation of an environment that will enable self-sustainable coexistence for many generations to come.

While pointing to these difficulties and challenges, I do not wish to diminish the very real and long-awaited signs of positive political progress which the European integration dynamic appears to be delivering. At the same time I want to recall that Bosnia is a very specific country with a troubled recent history. It needs a special and calibrated approach. We should not ignore this as we look to the future.

As Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitution was drafted as part of the Peace Agreement, the Dayton factor will always be present in some form in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, it is vital that the EU factor continues to be steadily strengthened, as the Euro-Atlantic future is Bosnia and Herzegovina's future, Bosnia and Herzegovina's only future. Needless to say, this trajectory has my full respect and wholehearted support.

My hope is that the country will draw strength from how far it has come during the last twenty years and that this reality will inspire political leaders to meet their responsibilities to their citizens, and – dare I say – to the international community as well.

Given how much the international community has invested in BiH

over the years it is only natural that we have expectations of the political leaders and authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have proven in the last six months that they can make progress – now we expect and need to see more.

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Mister President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to conclude by making three points.

One. Recent developments offer hope of genuine progress, but it is still early days. We need to see far more in the way of concrete results and I believe we will. 2012 can be a breakthrough year for the country in its efforts to progress towards full Euro-Atlantic integration. NATO and EU membership are two parts of a single path for Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are complimentary and I fully support both.

Two. We cannot ignore that challenges to the Peace Agreement continue. We must ensure that we are equipped to deal with such challenges. In doing so, we will also be supporting the efforts of those forces in the country that want to move forwards and progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Three. Our unity is our strength – the unity of the international community. Bosnia and Herzegovina could be a role model, an example of how the international community works together successfully, how it speaks with one voice. On the ground in Sarajevo this has been achieved already. Peter Sorensen, the new EU Special Representative, has had a brilliant start in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Let us give him our full support. He and I, as well as our offices, are working together well. I stand ready to continue to cooperate with him and all other actors, including the UN Security Council, for I firmly believe that as long as we remain united we will succeed.

We have come a long way in the last twenty years and invested a huge amount of energy and resources. Let us make sure we

remain committed and complete our mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina successfully. It can be achieved. It can be done.

Thank you.