

# **Statement: OHR reaction to Dragan Covic's refusal to step down**

The announcement by President Covic that he does not intend to step down from the BiH Presidency despite a criminal indictment against him confirmed by the BiH Court is deeply regrettable. It puts at grave risk BiH citizens' trust and international respect for BiH's institutions, at a time when BiH citizens are crying out for higher standards in public life and a break with the political culture of the past.

The BiH Presidency is responsible among other things for international relations. The International Community has made it clear that it could not have dealings with a president of BiH under criminal indictment. The PIC Steering Board has made clear its view that Dr Covic should resign for the sake of BiH's international reputation and for the integrity of the office he holds. So too have the EU, the US, and Canada in separate statements.

The High Representative is currently addressing the UN Security Council. He will review the situation and announce his decisions on his return. In the meantime he hopes that President Covic will use the holiday period to consider his position again and the damage to the integrity to the BiH institutions his staying in office would entail .