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 6 and 7 June. The PIC SB agreed that Bosnia and Herzegovina is at a critical juncture. Having received EU candidate status and having almost completed government formation at all levels, BiH has the opportunity to make swift progress on reforms vital for stability and prosperity. The PIC SB underlined that the future of the country is in the hands of BiH citizens and domestic politicians and urged all political actors to continue the recent positive trend and seize the opportunities to foster reconciliation and move the country forward on its Euro-Atlantic path for the benefit of all citizens. At the same time, the PIC SB agreed that BiH still faces significant challenges, including the Republika Srpska ruling coalition's secessionist threats and efforts to undermine the state and its institutions.

The pursuit of EU membership is a significant undertaking requiring political leadership, serious commitment to reforms, and the hard work of adopting and implementing legislation. Recognizing that, the PIC SB met with Ms. Borjana Krišto, Chairwoman of the BiH Council of Ministers, and Mr. Zukan Helez, Deputy CoM Chair and BiH Defense Minister, to discuss the new state government's plans to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration. The PIC SB also met with representatives of civil society organizations.

The PIC SB commended the swift establishment of authorities following the October elections as well as the positive trend in the work of the Council of Ministers and the smooth adoption of the state budget for 2023, in contrast to the stagnation of the previous period. Noting this positive momentum, the PIC SB calls upon them to address key challenges without delay:

- Achieve immediate and concrete results in implementing the **14 key priorities** of the European Commission's Opinion, keeping in mind that EU candidate status was

recommended on the understanding that a number of steps would be taken. These include, among others, the urgent adoption – in full compliance with EU standards – of integrity amendments to the BiH High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC) Law, as well as new BiH laws on the HJPC, courts, and the prevention of conflict of interest.

- Strengthen the **integrity of the electoral process** by revising the legal framework to implement the OSCE/ODIHR, GRECO, and Venice Commission recommendations. In light of the numerous allegations of serious fraud that plagued the 2022 elections, the authorities should fulfill this objective as soon as possible to ensure the 2024 municipal elections take place in a framework of enhanced election transparency and integrity.

- As outlined in the 5+2 agenda, find an acceptable and sustainable resolution to the issue of the **apportionment of state property** between state and other levels of authority by adopting state-level legislation to regulate the matter. The PIC SB commends the work of the OHR's State Property Working Group as a source of technical information for competent domestic institutions. The resolution of state property is critical for completing the 5+2 agenda, which is necessary to close the Office of the High Representative, and will benefit BiH citizens by making property available for productive use.

The PIC SB condemns all rhetoric and actions that threaten Bosnia and Herzegovina's peace, stability, and territorial integrity, including attempts to block or undermine the functioning of BiH institutions and the RS ruling coalition's threats of secession. The PIC SB calls on RS authorities to engage constructively in state institutions and uphold the rule of law, including by refraining from any pressure on BiH

Constitutional Court judges. The PIC SB discussed the risks to BiH's democracy arising from recent moves by the RS authorities to limit freedom of speech, restrict civil society and stigmatize minorities. These actions are to the profound detriment of all citizens.

The PIC SB supports the strengthening of democracy in BiH and the integrity of its institutions. This includes ensuring full equality of all citizens and eliminating discrimination, particularly by implementing the European Court of Human Rights case law in the Sejdić and Finci group of cases.

The PIC SB underlined the need for constructive and collaborative politics at all levels and offered its unwavering support and tangible assistance to those genuinely committed to progress. The PIC SB will oversee the developments as highlighted in this communique.

The PIC SB will hold its next regular meeting on 5-6 December 2023.