High Representative and European Union Special Representative at the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Miroslav Lajcak, on Tuesday updated the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament about developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and provided analysis on what can be expected in the coming period, in particular related to the new responsibilities of the European Union in a post-OHR Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The HR/EUSR briefed the Committee in detail on the country's progress in meeting the conditions and objectives for OHR's transition to EUSR, set by the Peace Implementation Council in February, and he highlighted the two main outstanding issues, State property and Brčko District.

"The political parties have diametrically opposing views on how to divide property between different levels of government. Our view is that a functional compromise is needed. This means that a state should have the infrastructure required to carry out its constitutional duties. Since the status of Brčko District was not resolved in the Dayton Peace Agreement, there has to be a way of fully implementing the Agreement that was

subsequently reached. Brcko has to have a clear position within the BiH legal framework," the HR/EUSR said.

The need for constitutional change was raised by both the HR/EUSR and by members of the Foreign Affaires Committee, who repeated that it is clear that there will need to be changes to the current constitution in the process of European integration. "Although majorities of each of BiH's constituent peoples accept the country as their common homeland, there is as yet no consensus on how this common state should be organised. BiH has three different and competing visions of the past and the future of the country. It is inevitable that there will have to be some changes made to the BiH Constitution, if nothing else but in the context of EU accession," the HR/EUSR noted.

The HR/EUSR emphasised that BiH is not a typical EU candidate country. "What in other countries may be a technical requirement, in BiH can easily be manipulated into a highly political issue. A good example of this is the single economic space as one of the founding principles of the EU. Its benefits are universally recognised across 27 EU Member States, but in Bosnia and Herzegovina it is contested within one state! This is a clear misunderstanding of the European integration process. While European Integration is repeatedly referred to by political elites, the actions of the parties confirm beyond doubt that the key question for them is still the National/Ethnic Question," the High Representative and EU Special Representative concluded.