Remarks by HR Valentin Inzko and PDHR Michael Scanlan at the press conference following the session of the PIC Steering Board

High Representative, Valentin Inzko

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon to you all and a warm welcome to today's press conference.

Before we begin, allow me to introduce my Deputy and Brcko Supervisor, Michael Scanlan. Since he joined us in February, this was his first session of the political directors of the PIC Steering Board.

Mike and I will brief you on the contents of the discussions that we had over the last two days and the conclusions that were outlined in the Communique which will be distributed to you after the press conference. Of course, we will also answer your questions afterwards.

It is unfortunate that, as it was the case with the last communique, we begin the press conference by noting that the Russian Federation was not able to join the Communique. I will not go into details about their stance, as I am certain the

Russian Federation will provide you with explanations.

I do wish to reiterate, however, that the Russian Federation is a valued member of the PIC and that despite sometimes differing views, the international community remains united in its goal of encouraging a stable and prosperous, united BiH based on the Dayton Agreement.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last two days, we have had an extensive agenda, which, I am sure, does not come as a surprise for you.

You will remember that, the last time we met here, we told you that government formation was one of the topics discussed, and we urged rapid and smooth formation of the authorities.

Yet, here we are, six months later and the parties comprising the ruling majorities at the State and Federation levels have failed to resolve their differences and appoint the new authorities.

In the absence of new State and Federation executive authorities, the respective parliaments have also ground to a halt. There has been no sign of flexibility on any side that might resolve the impasse anytime soon.

Delays in the implementation of election results prevent the country from undertaking the necessary reforms.

Other relevant topics that you will no doubt raise in the "questions and answers" portion of the press conference include the issue of the reserve police and the situation related to the HJPC.

The political directors have discussed both of these issues and the conclusions are in the Communique.

The steps to create a reserve police have resulted in a negative spiral of distrust in BiH. This should be stopped and

the focus should be on improved coordination and restoring trust and confidence.

Political directors of the PIC Steering Board have called upon the authorities at the state, entity and cantonal levels to improve law enforcement cooperation and ensure that the existing police forces are adequately resourced and properly trained to address numerous challenges facing BiH and its citizens, including migration.

Time and energy should not be wasted on an internal police arms race. Such race would not solve any problems, only intensify the existing ones.

As I always say, we need fewer weapons, and fewer people in uniforms, not more.

Time and energy should be directed towards another issue which is of great concern for people in every corner of this country – very poor level of trust in the judicial system. This is one of the key reasons so many citizens have already decided to leave BiH for good.

It is not always the economic situation and the joblessness. Many times it is the poor trust in the judicial system.

The most recent affair concerning the HJPC has further highlighted the problem and reaffirmed the urgent need for substantial reforms. Authorities need to work on reestablishing rule of law in BiH and restoring the public's trust in the institutions. The first step would be to revise the Law on the HJPC, to regulate the functioning of the Council in a way that guarantees professionalism and accountability, and highest standards of most respected lawyers in the country.

Now, I would like to give floor to my Deputy, Mike Scanlan. He will mention other issues we discussed and brief you on the meeting we had during the second day of the PIC session.

PDHR, Michael Scanlan

Thank you, High Representative, and let me also welcome the journalists and thank you for being here today.

Let me start by adding that in addition to what the High Representative said the political directors also highlighted as a critical issue the rapid implementation of the electoral reforms recommended by ODIHR and GRECO.

This was also raised directly with the Joint Collegium of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a task they could immediately address if they formed their commissions. The local elections in 2020 are only 16 months away so action is need now. Building confidence in the electoral process is in the interest of every political party and is the foundation for good governance.

The political directors also expressed their view that it is high time to have local elections in Mostar. All citizens of BiH have the right to elect their city officials, and in Mostar, as everywhere else, as a unified city.

As I mentioned, the political directors of the PIC Steering Board met today with members of the Joint Collegium of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We went to hear what are their priorities during this mandate, and to see if they had already identified common ground.

At the same time, I would be remiss not to note that the BiH Parliamentary Assembly has been formed for over six months but has not been carrying out its responsibilities. Every person in BiH who goes to work and receives a salary is expected to work, it strikes me the expectations for the members of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly should be no different.

Indeed, there is a strong view in the PIC that common ground needs to be found in the Parliamentary Assembly in order to proceed with a forward-looking agenda that is in the interest

of all peoples and citizens of BiH. As I mentioned rapid progress on electoral reform is possible if they were to form their commissions now.

Simultaneously, the PIC SB has called on the BiH political and institutional leaders to move forward quickly to complete the formation of authorities on all levels.

Until the new BiH CoM and the Federation Government are appointed, the previous governments must work in their caretaker capacity. This also means that the new BiH Parliamentary Assembly must carry out its oversight of the executive branch of government regardless of its status.

Finally, the view in the PIC is that all levels of government need to foster dialogue and cooperation amongst all peoples in BiH and to avoid nationalistic and divisive rhetoric.

The people of BiH are voting with their feet and leaving the country, and only good governance and policies that promote stability and prosperity for the country as a whole will stop the outflow.

Thank you.