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European Union

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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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To: Delegations

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Subject: Council conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Council conclusions (16 October 2017)

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by the Council at its 3566th meeting held on 16 October 2017.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

1. The Council reiterates its unequivocal commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective as a single, united and sovereign country. The Council regrets that a divisive rhetoric rooted in the past and an early electoral agenda have over the last months slowed down the pace of reform and affected the political climate.
2. The Council recalls the importance of the country's commitment to the EU integration process. It notes positively that the initial implementation of the Reform Agenda has provided the first steps of structural adjustments to the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It nevertheless urges the authorities to step up implementation of comprehensive reforms, in an inclusive manner, to the benefit of citizens. Additionally, the Council calls on Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions to step up efforts including regarding the functioning and the independence of the judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime as well as the fight against terrorism and the prevention of radicalisation.
3. The Council also encourages Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue the work done to answer the Commission's Opinion Questionnaire through the coordination mechanism on EU matters. The Council reiterates its calls on all levels of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure the effectiveness of the coordination mechanism, including for the purpose of ensuring harmonised and consolidated answers to the Commission's Opinion Questionnaire.
4. Whilst acknowledging that the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina lists Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs as constituent peoples (along with Others), the Council reiterates that the principles of equality of all citizens and non-discrimination shall be fully warranted. The Council underlines that no legislative or political steps should be taken which would make the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci ruling and related rulings more challenging.

5. In addition to the outstanding OSCE-ODIHR recommendations to further improve the electoral framework, the Council expects Bosnia and Herzegovina to address, within the necessary deadlines, the December 2016 ruling by the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning specific electoral provisions on the Federation House of Peoples. The Council considers that electoral reforms should be approached in a spirit of consensus and dialogue, as an important matter, thereby also calling on Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement OSCE-ODHIR recommendations in order to move the country towards European standards, improving democratic processes of future elections.
6. The EU continues at the same time to urge the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the support of the international community, to accelerate their efforts to address the disposal of excess ammunition and demining and other outstanding issues.
7. The Council welcomes the continued presence of Operation Althea, which retains the capability to contribute to the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities' deterrence capacity if the situation so requires while focusing on capacity building and training. In this context, as part of the overall EU strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Council confirms the EU's readiness to continue at this stage the executive military role of Operation Althea to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to maintain the safe and secure environment, under a renewed UN mandate. The Council looks forward to the presentation of the foreseen Strategic Review, as a basis for discussion with Member States on options for the future of the Operation, also bearing in mind Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in its EU integration process and taking into account the security situation on the ground.

The Council recognises the importance of continued coordination of EUFOR Althea with other international actors on the ground.