

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**EU DECLARATION ON THE PIC**

In view of the Ministerial meeting of the PIC for Bosnia and Herzegovina, taking place on 23-24 May, the EU recalled its full commitment to the Peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this regard, it commended the remarkable work accomplished in BiH by the High Representative and his staff, and reiterated its entire support to their action.

The EU took note that approaching the fifth year after Dayton substantial progress that has been made. The security situation has stabilized. Major reconstruction has been completed. Minority returns are accelerating. The Brcko District is established and functioning. Successive elections have initiated a trend towards growing political pluralism. BiH is accepted as a nation state. There is a new mood across BiH as we move into the new millenium. The people of Croatia have shown the way by voting for peace, freedom and justice. There is a movement toward true "Ownership" by the people and by civil society, with democratic freedom and economic transparency finally taking root.

However, much more could have been achieved: political obstruction and the pursuit of narrow ethnic agendas by some, is holding the people of BiH back from reaping the full economic and democratic benefits the Dayton/Paris Accords held out to them. The EU supports the High Representative in the use his full powers to ensure implementation of the Peace Accords, including the removal of those obstructing economic reforms.

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The programme presented, if agreed to by the PIC, will empower the people of BiH to seize the opportunities open to those in a modern European state, and to choose the path of prosperity and democratic freedoms.

#### **Implementing Dayton/Paris Accords means**

- Accelerating Economic Reform to avoid economic collapse. Breaking the stranglehold of political parties on economic and commercial life. Simplifying regulations to free BiHs entrepreneurs. Ensuring that the people of BiH have the telecommunications, power and banking services they need, and can join the new generation of internet technology.
- Developing effective and democratic state institutions based on a professional civil service, and creating state-level regulatory bodies to implement the provisions under the Dayton Constitution in order for BiH to serve the interest of its own people.
- Fighting corruption and organized crime as well as increasing transparency and accountability, including breaking the links between political parties and business.
- Establishing an independent and impartial judiciary that will ensure the rule of law.
- Refugees returning to their homes in an accelerated and self-sustaining process.
- Bringing persons indicted for war crimes who are still at large to justice.
- Completing the transformation of Media and Public Broadcasting and ensuring that the media are allowed to operate without intimidation and political interference.
- Reducing military expenditure and embarking on fundamental restructuring of the Entity Armed Forces based on the financial viability and defence needs of BiH.
- Playing a positive role in the Stability Pact process.

Implementing the Dayton/Paris Accords, through political, social and economic reforms, will pave the way for the integration of BiH to join the other states of South Eastern Europe in the EU Stabilization and Association process.

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