

CROATIA

Statement by

H. E. Ambassador Ivan Šimonović

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia

at

the UN Security Council debate on

**The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

*New York, 3 November 2021*

*– As delivered –*

Mr. President,

Congratulations and best wishes for your presidency. I also congratulate Kenya for the excellent performance during October.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU its Members and other aligned States. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Croatia reiterates its support to the extension of the operation EUFOR Althea, as well as to the High Representative Christian Schmidt. We remain committed to working closely with the mission as well as with the Office of High Representative.

Since our last debate, the tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as over Bosnia and Herzegovina further increased. It is thus critical that this discussion helps to ease them and does not add fuel to the fire. The current disrespect of its Constitution, divisive rhetoric and glorification of war criminals, blockade of the institutions and the lack of progress on the electoral and other necessary reforms is extremely worrying. Overcoming these challenges is important for the country, as well for the stability of the increasingly turbulent Western Balkans.

Croatia supports a stable, peaceful and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina, its EU integration, the rule of law and human rights. As a signatory of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina it remains a staunch supporter of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its territorial integrity as a sovereign state, based on equality of its three constituent peoples and all citizens.

Unfortunately, the current Election law and the electoral practice do not provide for such equality. Just one example: current electoral framework deprives Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina of their right to elect their legitimate representative in the State Presidency, because it allows for electoral engineering. This and other shortcomings are unacceptable. They weaken and delegitimise key state institutions and negatively affect their functioning. We therefore strongly support the legislative changes necessary for the Election law to comply with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and relevant decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the Ljubić case.

Changes to the Election law and the constitutional setup of the country should be an outcome of a democratic dialogue within Bosnia and Herzegovina, fully respecting the rights of all its constituent peoples and other citizens. Only that way, Bosnia and Herzegovina, its peoples and all citizens can get what they really need: legitimate, functioning institutions that will neither be manipulated, nor blocked.

In order to ensure the legitimacy of the 2022 general elections, the consensus on the electoral reform should be reached as soon as possible. Successful electoral reforms would relax political tensions and help to shift the country's focus on priorities, such as fighting corruption and implementing other reforms along the EU fourteen accession criteria. Otherwise, the young and educated will continue to leave because of political insecurity, poor economic situation and the overall lack of perspective, as the High Representative stresses in his report.

Mr. President, let me conclude.

Croatia continues with its political as well as practical support to Bosnia and Herzegovina. It provided help to mitigate the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic, including through donation of vaccines. Croatia has been assisting in cases of natural disasters, participating in joint infrastructural projects, and sharing the EU integration experiences.

We call on international partners to join us in contributing to the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina and promoting the necessary reforms, especially of the electoral system. We encourage its political leaders to take upon the responsibility for the future of the country and navigate through the present impasse. What the country needs is much more transparency, cooperation, democratic dialogue and compromises, and far less political, including electoral manipulations, divisions and unilateral decisions.

It is the only way to overcome mutual fears and suspicions, curb unconstitutional unitarist and secessionist tendencies, and promote democracy, development and human rights for all.

Thank you, Mr. President.