Consolidating stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans

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The Council had an exchange of views on the recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Firstly, it welcomed the appointment of Ambassador Valentin Inzko as EU Special Representative/High Representative and discussed the continued planning for a reinforced EU presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

After the discussion, the Council adopted the following conclusions. In particular, it:

- reiterated its full support to the European perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina and called upon the local political leaders to engage thoroughly and with stronger determination on the necessary reform agenda in order for the country to make substantial progress on its way towards the European Union;
- encouraged Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue fully implementing the Interim Agreement;
- reconfirmed its readiness for a transition from the Office of High Representative to increased local ownership, supported by a reinforced European Union presence, as soon as the conditions are met. The Council acknowledged the progress of the EU preparations, presented by the SG/HR and the Enlargement Commissioner, for its strengthened engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina under a reinforced, double-hatted EUSR/Head of the Commission Delegation;
- urged Bosnia and Herzegovina to maximise its efforts to complete fulfilment of the five objectives and two conditions set by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board. To this aim, the Council strongly encouraged continuation of the Prud/Odzak process, urging that the widest possible consensus be found and called for the commitments undertaken in this context to be rapidly translated into further progress and concrete legislative results.

Moreover, the Council appointed Ambassador Valentin Inzko as EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and welcomed his appointment as High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Council commended the former EU Special Representative and High Representative Miroslav Laják for his outstanding efforts and commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina and its European future.

Lastly, the Council noted that, despite the challenging political environment, the security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained stable. It welcomed the progress on the preparatory work for a possible evolution of Operation ALTHEA and agreed to keep this work under regular review so that a decision on the future of the operation could be taken once the necessary conditions had been met. In this context, the Council reiterated that the possible evolution of operation ALTHEA would need to take political developments into account. The Council noted that cooperation with NATO on operation ALTHEA was continuing to work smoothly.