

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/462/22
1 April 2022

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1365th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

31 March 2022

In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the distinguished Ambassador Kathleen Kavalec for her detailed report. We note the Mission's efforts in a wide range of areas, but, frankly, we see little reason to be particularly optimistic about the field operation's effectiveness and productivity.

The negotiations embarked on by the political forces within Bosnia and Herzegovina in May 2021 to amend the country's electoral law have not produced results. Despite the Mission's focus last year on electoral reform as one of the priority areas, a public opinion poll revealed low levels of confidence in the process by the population.

Bosnia and Herzegovina still lacks key institutional mechanisms to prevent corruption, including a national anti-corruption strategy, although the Mission's contribution in 2021 to the relevant legislative framework is quite conspicuous.

Freedom of the media and the rights of journalists are not reflected in the report. We believe this is an important aspect and would consider it justified to include it in a future report.

We were interested to read the section on the Mission's security co-operation with the authorities of the host State, including the question of parliamentary oversight over security and defence. However, it would be just as interesting to hear about specific activities to assist the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in combating criminal activity and organized crime and with respect to the results of such activities. We have seen this, for example, with combating trafficking in human beings and in the training of cybersecurity specialists. The courses organized by the Mission for nearly 400 law enforcement officers are a step in this direction.

We also consider the efforts to support educational projects that foster inter-ethnic interaction, mutual understanding and trust to be timely and useful.

The Mission's contribution to the destruction of some 150 tonnes of weapons and explosives that posed a potential risk to the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is also seen as very important.

We agree with the assessment that environmental challenges require close attention. In that context, we should consider a redeployment of staff within the Mission in order to increase its activity in this area, not least as the environmental agenda could serve as a unifying basis for work in other areas as well.

We note that the current report contains a more measured and balanced approach in describing the current difficult internal political situation and the actions of the parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to which we drew the attention of the distinguished Ambassador Kavalec last year. At the same time, we feel obliged to comment on one point. The report states that the draft law on the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, adopted by the Republika Srpska National Assembly on 10 February 2022, was condemned by the international community. With all due respect, however, we are not prepared to accept that the joint statement on this issue by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland Zbigniew Rau, and the Secretary General of our Organization, Helga Schmid, expresses the opinion of the entire international community. Once again, we emphasize that the Mission should demonstrate the most balanced approach possible, especially when it comes to this kind of sensitive issue.

In conclusion, we should like to wish the Mission staff and its Head further success in their work within the framework of their existing mandate.

Thank you for your attention.