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**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR ZHEGLOV,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1260th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 February 2020

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

Mr. Chairperson,
Ms. Kavalec,

We join in congratulating you on your appointment as Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are confident that your years of experience in the diplomatic service will enable you to build a field presence working in the interests of the host State and fully in line with the consensus nature of the OSCE.

We agree with the assessment that this year is a milestone year in the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In December we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, known unofficially as the Dayton Peace Agreement. This agreement not only put an end to the bloody hostilities of 1992 to 1995 but has also brought peace and stability to Bosnia and Herzegovina for a quarter of a century. As a guarantor State under the Dayton Agreement, Russia has always advocated compliance with its basic principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, ensuring broad powers for the two entities (Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), as well as equal rights for the three constituent peoples.

This year will also be important for the OSCE Mission in the country. Without a doubt, the field presence has made a considerable contribution to the creation and strengthening of institutions of governance and the development of democratic processes in the host State. At the same time, the OSCE Mission, which, I should note, has always been headed by diplomats from the United States of America, cannot ignore its responsibility for the remaining shortcomings.

By the same token, we should not exaggerate the scale of the problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In spite of some acute differences between the Bosnian parties, they have generally managed to find mutually acceptable solutions and agree on approaches to their common future. The approval of Zoran Tegeltija in December 2019 as Chairperson of the Council of Ministers is telling in this regard, in spite of attempts to thwart this with politicizing demands regarding implementation of the NATO Membership Action Plan. It is important for the OSCE Mission to refrain from taking part in any events connected with Bosnia and Herzegovina's relationship to the Alliance. They are not part of the mandate of

the field presence and exacerbate animosities within the country and distract the Bosnian parties from working on reform.

The OSCE Mission should strive to report objectively and in a balanced fashion on the activities of the Bosnian parties and avoid any repetition of their stereotyped perception. We find the artificial increase in external pressure on Republika Srpska and on the legally elected Bosnian-Serb leaders to be counter-productive. This is all the more true against the background of the deliberately downplayed reaction to the Declaration by the Bosniak Party of Democratic Action of 14 September 2019, the basic intent of which is to propose a revision of the Dayton constitution in a manner unacceptable to the other two constituent peoples.

The introduction into parliamentary procedure by representatives of the Bosnian Serbs and Croats of a draft law on the removal of foreign experts from the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a direct consequence of the inefficiency of the country's central judicial authorities, which we have repeatedly drawn attention to. We strongly believe that the issue of reforming the justice system in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be one of the top priorities on the domestic Bosnian agenda, and that solutions should be sought by the Bosnians themselves, without any prescriptions being imposed from outside. We urge the partners not to dramatize the situation, which is fully within the Dayton framework.

We trust that the Bosnian leaders will be responsible enough not to use the forthcoming sorrowful anniversary of the events in Srebrenica for narrow political ends. In this situation, it is vital to refrain from contentious interpretations of the tragedy and to focus on calls for reconciliation of the sides.

We are counting on the OSCE Mission to continue to work to facilitate the peaceful coexistence of the ethnic groups on the basis of the principle of mutual respect, consolidation of interconfessional harmony and tolerance in accordance with the provisions of the Dayton Agreement. In our view, the field presence should be helping the authorities in the host country to overcome discriminatory practices in education, prevent hate crimes, counter transborder threats and assist in the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

We believe in principle that responsibility for what is happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be transferred fully and as rapidly as possible to the local authorities and that the Office of the High Representative should be closed. The international protectorate has long outlived its purpose and hinders the normal development of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In conclusion, we should like to wish Ms. Kavalec and the Mission staff further success in their work.

Thank you for your attention.