Minister of State for European Affairs, Lucinda Creighton TD remarks on Council and Commission Statements: 2012 progress report on Bosnia and Herzegovina

Wednesday, 22 May 2013
European Parliament, Strasbourg

President,
Honourable Members,

Developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina have not kept pace with our hopes and expectations. We have a number of concerns, and I know that these are broadly shared by this Parliament as reflected in the motion for Resolution which you will be voting on tomorrow. Let me take this opportunity to thank Doris Pack in particular for the commitment and knowledge which she has shown as your rapporteur. Here in particular the positive influence that you can bring to bear on current and future developments is very important.

Last December the Council noted that some progress had been made in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the start of 2012 with the formation of a State-level Council of Ministers. It also welcomed the adoption of two key EU-related laws – the Law on State Aid and on Population Census. However, it is regrettable that the momentum brought about through these developments has not been maintained. We are particularly disappointed that progress generally on the EU agenda has stalled, and that the use of divisive rhetoric has continued.

Also in December the Council welcomed the launch of the European Commission’s High-Level Dialogue on the Accession Process with Bosnia and Herzegovina’s political representatives which took place in June 2012. However, the timelines of the
Roadmap forming part of this Dialogue have not been met and we remain concerned at the lack of implementation of the political agreements.

One of the top priorities for Bosnia and Herzegovina is to bring its Constitution into compliance with the European Convention of Human Rights and the Sejdic/Finci ruling. We have to see evidence of serious moves in this direction before the Stabilisation and Association Agreement can enter into force.

Completing the implementation of the Sejdic/Finci ruling is important. So too is the need for Bosnia and Herzegovina to demonstrate a satisfactory track record in implementing its obligations under the SAA/Interim Agreement. These key elements are essential before the EU could realistically consider any membership application.

The Council has also underlined the importance of establishing an effective coordination mechanism for engagement with the EU, including for the effective use of the EU's pre-accession assistance, as well as ensuring fiscal sustainability. Furthermore the State Aid and Population Census Laws now need to be fully implemented.

We have reaffirmed our support for the Structured Dialogue on Justice within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process, and have called on all the relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate constructively in this process. This is key to ensuring the consolidation of an independent, accountable, credible, impartial and efficient judicial system. This would benefit all citizens across the country.

President,
Honourable Members

The EU intends to continue to strengthen its support for Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU integration process. As part of this process it has reaffirmed its full support for a strengthened EU presence on the ground.
But the political leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina must intensify their efforts. Existing commitments must be fulfilled, and further work is required to bring greater stability and prosperity to the country. The leadership owes this to the citizens, who in turn deserve a better future.

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