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**EU STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION IN BOSNIA AND  
HERZEGOVINA, AMBASSADOR DOUGLAS DAVIDSON**

The EU is pleased to welcome Ambassador Davidson to the PC today and thanks him for his comprehensive report. The EU has taken note with interest of his Report and congratulates the Ambassador for the valuable work of the Mission and its field offices as well as for the fruitful cooperation with the host government.

In the Council Conclusions of January the European Union urged the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina decisively to implement all the reforms needed for the opening of negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. The European Union further recalled that full cooperation with the ICTY, in particular by the Republika Srpska, was an essential requirement for Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress towards the EU, to which the EU remains committed. The EU therefore welcomed the voluntary surrender to and transfer by the Republika Srpska authorities of indicted Savo Todovic in January as an important first step in the process of arresting and transferring all indicted persons who continue to evade international justice.

We note Tuesday's vote by the Republika Srpska National Assembly on a new government and we urge the new government to resume the necessary reform efforts.

In the field of democratisation the EU welcomes the entry into force of the new Law on Local Self Government in the Republika Srpska on 1<sup>st</sup> January which will provide an enhanced framework for the public administration at local level. In this regard, however, the EU notes that progress has been much slower in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and invites the authorities of this entity to conform its legislation to the European Charter on local self-government.

The EU welcomed the Regional Ministerial Conference on Refugee Returns and its Declaration adopted in Sarajevo on 31<sup>st</sup> January this year. The EU highly values the political commitments by the three countries to finalize this process by the end of 2006 and encourages the Governments involved to pursue their practical implementation. We also welcome the measures

agreed between the three countries to enhance regional cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of war crime cases.

We commend the Mission's contribution to the harmonization of lower-level legislation with the state-level Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education. In this regard, however, we agree with Ambassador Davidson that the International Community unfortunately remains the main driving force behind education reform.

Developing a single, state-level Ministry of Defence remains one of the top priorities on the BiH reform agenda. Therefore, the EU commends the Mission's contribution to the implementation of the defence reform. Along with the EUPM, the successful takeover of SFOR by EUFOR last December is a further proof of the EU's commitment to stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The EU shares the view of Ambassador Davidson that cooperation with other international organizations as well as with governmental actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina is essential. In this respect, Bosnia and Herzegovina's national ownership of reforms is crucial. We believe that with its unique field presence the Mission is very well placed to contribute to the joint efforts of the international community to further democratic reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU looks forward to continuing its fruitful cooperation with the Mission.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the EU wishes to thank Ambassador Davidson and his staff for their significant contribution on the ground to ensure sustainable peace and democratic development in this country.

The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia<sup>1</sup> align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup>Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process