

**Joint statement by Co-Chairs Snježana Novaković-Bursać (Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Romeo Franz (European Parliament)**

**31 October 2023**

*Following the third meeting of the EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee on 30 and 31 October 2023 Co-Chairs Snježana Novaković-Bursać (Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Romeo Franz (European Parliament) stated:*

We just successfully concluded the third meeting of the EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, almost eight years after its first meeting here in Sarajevo in November 2015. We had intensive, frank and fruitful discussions on EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina relations and the state of fulfilment of the 14 priorities as set out in the Commission opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union. It was very important for our two Delegations to be able to interact directly on a range of issues, both in formal and informal settings. Last week many Members of the Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina who are also Members of the Joint Committee on European Integration also had the opportunity to participate in several meetings in the European Parliament in Brussels.

This first full-fledged meeting of the EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee following the adoption of its Rules of Procedure in June 2021 comes at a crucial moment. Next week, the European Commission will publish its 2023 enlargement package with a series of country reports that will for the first time include reports on Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are hopeful that our work of the past days will lead the European Commission to conclude that key priority number 3 is fulfilled. We are determined not to lose the regained momentum in our inter-parliamentary relations and to breathe new life into the parliamentary dimension of the EU-Bosnia and Herzegovina Stabilisation and Association Agreement. We have therefore already agreed to hold the fourth meeting of our Committee in March 2024 in Strasbourg.

In December 2022, Bosnia and Herzegovina was granted candidate country status, a decision that was based on new geopolitical realities rather than on tangible progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina on its EU path. We acknowledge the limited progress of the previous months towards attaining the objectives outlined in the European Commission's Opinion and recognise the need for unwavering commitment and a mature focus of all decision makers on the European integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on political consensus. A possible decision in December this year to open accession negotiations would certainly further encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina to work diligently towards the actual opening of the first chapters. It would also be additional proof of the EU's resolve to prioritise enlargement on the understanding that the EU integration trajectory of individual countries remains a challenging and merit-based enterprise. We understand that the decision to start accession negotiations will depend on tangible and concrete progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina one year after obtaining candidate country status, in line with the European Commission's opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union.