

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 28 June 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In accordance with Security Council resolutions [1575 \(2004\)](#), [1639 \(2005\)](#), [1722 \(2006\)](#), [1785 \(2007\)](#), [1845 \(2008\)](#), [1895 \(2009\)](#), [1948 \(2010\)](#), [2019 \(2011\)](#), [2074 \(2012\)](#), [2123 \(2013\)](#), [2183 \(2014\)](#), [2247 \(2015\)](#), [2315 \(2016\)](#), [2384 \(2017\)](#), [2443 \(2018\)](#), [2496 \(2019\)](#) and [2549 \(2020\)](#), I have the honour to transmit herewith the letter dated 9 June 2021 from the Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell Fontelles, transmitting the fifty-second report on the activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see annex).

The report covers the period from 1 September 2020 to 28 February 2021.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**



Annex

In accordance with Security Council resolution [1575 \(2004\)](#) and subsequent resolutions in which the Council requested that Member States, acting through or in cooperation with the European Union, report to the Council on the activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, please find attached hereto the fifty-second such report (see enclosure).

(Signed) Josep **Borrell Fontelles**

Enclosure

Report of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

I. Introduction

1. The present report on the activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea) covers the period from 1 September 2020 to 28 February 2021.
2. The Security Council, in its resolutions [1575 \(2004\)](#), [1639 \(2005\)](#), [1722 \(2006\)](#), [1785 \(2007\)](#), [1845 \(2008\)](#), [1895 \(2009\)](#), [1948 \(2010\)](#), [2019 \(2011\)](#), [2074 \(2012\)](#), [2123 \(2013\)](#), [2183 \(2014\)](#), [2247 \(2015\)](#), [2315 \(2016\)](#), [2384 \(2017\)](#), [2443 \(2018\)](#), [2496 \(2019\)](#) and [2549 \(2020\)](#), requested that Member States, acting through or in cooperation with the European Union, report to the Council on the activities of EUFOR at six-month intervals. This is the fifty-second such report.

II. Security situation

3. During the reporting period, there was no major change from the previous report in the security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Political tensions, which continue to be the main driver of instability, rose again during the campaigning period for local elections, which were held on 15 November 2020. In Mostar, the elections were held on 20 December 2020, for the first time since 2008, without major incidents and without a threat to the safe and secure environment; a new city council and mayor are now in place. Systemic shortcomings in operational cooperation among law enforcement agencies, with their very limited exchange of intelligence and their vulnerability to political interference, remain key issues of concern. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continued to have a high impact on the country throughout the reporting period, with a risk of significant economic and social fallout.
4. The migration situation continued to be challenging for the country, owing to political blockages, institutional mismanagement and a lack of adequate inter-agency cooperation and data exchange. In late December 2020, the inaction of the authorities led to a humanitarian crisis, which was defused following high-level European Union engagement and the set-up of a provisional tent camp in Lipa. The European Union continued to highlight that Bosnia and Herzegovina needed to ensure effective coordination, at all levels, of border management and migration management capacity, in addition to ensuring the functioning of the asylum system.

III. Implementation of the 2019 strategic review of Operation Althea

5. In response to the recommendation made in the 2019 strategic review to fully implement and consolidate Operation Althea's refocusing on its core mandate, EUFOR continued to strengthen its intelligence capabilities and processes, in order to be aware of any change in the security situation in a timely manner.

IV. Activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

6. During the reporting period, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to pose a serious challenge to the Operation. However, the continued and coherent application of efficient emergency and protective measures enabled the force to remain fully operational.

7. During the reporting period, EUFOR continued the implementation and consolidation of the recommendations agreed by Member States in the follow-up to the 2019 strategic review, achieving the transition from an approach based mainly on situational awareness to a model based on predictive intelligence, which allows for the more timely availability of information on possible changes in the security situation and the timely deployment of reserve forces, if needed.

8. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on cooperation with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although activities have partially resumed, progress by the national authorities has been considerably delayed with regard to the disposal of surplus ammunition, weapons and explosives and to humanitarian demining. On a positive note, the collective training of the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in coordination with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization headquarters in Sarajevo, resumed in the second semester of 2020, and all planned activities were implemented. The forces also participated in the operational rehearsal level 2 exercise in October 2020.

9. The logistics situation of the demining battalion of the armed forces is still in critical condition, as it urgently needs financial or other forms of support to renew its outdated essential equipment, without which it can no longer contribute to demining activities. During the reporting period, a number of options continued to be explored to solve the problem but, to date, no satisfactory solution has been found. In 2020, the national mine action authorities only achieved 34 per cent of the envisaged demining target of 113 km².

10. While EUFOR has continued to coordinate, support and monitor all activities under the masterplan for the disposal of surplus ammunition, weapons and explosives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic further extended the delays caused by the stagnant decision-making process of the national authorities. Likewise, safety and security upgrades for infrastructure at prospective ammunition storage sites have continued with some delays. A positive development is that the marking and registration of small arms and light weapons has been nearly completed. In parallel, record-keeping on such weapons continued, as did capacity-building, training and infrastructure upgrades. In 2020, the disposal process for heavy weapons and vehicles was kicked off with a feasibility study. Pending political decisions, the study will be followed by a technical inventory of all heavy weapons and vehicles and the preparation of standard operating procedures and regulations for the disposal process itself.

V. Outlook

11. Operation Althea will continue to adapt and evolve, in view of the fact that stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not entrenched and that the security situation could be affected by several internal and external factors of concern. In this context, the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic plays an important role. The next strategic review of the Operation will be presented in June 2021. In the meantime, EUFOR will continue to consolidate the outcomes of the 2017 and 2019 strategic reviews. EUFOR tasks will remain under regular review by the Council of the European Union.