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st meeting

Tuesday, 30 April 2024, 4 p.m.

New York

President: Mrs. Frazier (Malta)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Koudri
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault
Guyana	Ms. Persaud
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. George
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations; Ms. Željka Cvijanović and Mr. Christian Schmidt, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Jenča.

Mr. Jenča: In July of last year, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs was invited to brief the Security Council on developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since then, we have observed both positive and worrisome developments.

We noted the decision of the European Council in March to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the European Commission's assessment of the progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina on key legislative and judiciary reforms. There is consensus among the political leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina that European integration is the best route to ensuring the country's future stability and prosperity. The European project has become a unique chance for the continent to bridge divides and shape a stable and prosperous future despite ongoing challenges.

Based on a united commitment to a stable and peaceful future, in late 2022 Bosnia and Herzegovina's Council of Ministers sought the support of the United Nations through the Peacebuilding Fund to contribute to strengthening social cohesion, respect for diversity and understanding and trust, especially among young women and men in different communities.

The initiatives supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, which met with a positive response from the Secretary-General, have begun to be implemented, in close cooperation with the authorities at all levels and with communities across the country. The projects are focused on the implementation of the women and peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas, as well as on community dialogue.

At the same time, in recent months we have witnessed actions and statements that contradict those positive developments. The Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, who has undertaken official visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region in the past few years, has noted concerns about repeated threats of secessionism, the promotion of hate speech, denials of genocide and the glorification of war criminals who were convicted by local and international courts. She recently issued statements on the dangers of those trends and their long-lasting impact on peace and reconciliation in the country. She has stressed the importance of addressing the legacy of the past, including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Sustainable peace can be achieved only by promoting understanding of the past through truth-seeking and accountability and by addressing the root causes and continued impact of such violence on society.

The International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Court of Justice have established that acts of genocide against the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina were committed in and around Srebrenica in July 1995. The Secretary-General has consistently called on everyone in the region and beyond to counter hate speech, the rhetoric of division and narratives of mistrust and fear. He has said, and I quote, "All communities, all leaders and all organizations — including the media — must make this pledge". Many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have for decades done remarkable work to promote trust and reconciliation in the country. Of course, it is primarily the responsibility of the authorities and institutions at all levels to help the whole of society deal constructively with the past, demonstrate respect for all victims and survivors and work for a prosperous and peaceful future for all Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens.

I would like to recall that the United Nations is neither a signatory to the Dayton General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina nor a member of the Steering Board of the Peace

Implementation Council. The United Nations is committed to supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path towards reconciliation, peacebuilding and sustainable development.

The President: I thank Mr. Jenča for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Cvijanović.

Ms. Cvijanović: Let me thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to address the Security Council and share my views and insights on the situation in my country.

The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina acts as the collective tripartite Head of State. I am the elected member of the Presidency from Republika Srpska, one of the two entities that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina. Just to remind the Council, the other two members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina are elected from the country's other entity, known as the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, showing clearly that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a single electoral unit when it comes to the election of the common institutions at the Bosnia and Herzegovina level. That also indicates that the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, included as annex 4 in the Dayton General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was carefully designed to establish a system of two highly autonomous entities and three constituent peoples with important power-sharing mechanisms, in order to ensure that each of the constituent peoples is protected from domination by either of the other ethnic groups and that they will all be able to participate in governing the country on equal terms. And it is exactly that principle of equality that has been the major keeper of peace and stability in our country — not repression, tutoring or international interventions, as is often wrongly and unwisely claimed by those who want to justify such international interventionism and colonial behaviour.

I would like to emphasize some of the critical issues that have burdened Bosnia and Herzegovina and hindered its progress. But I want to first say a few words about Republika Srpska and the positions of its institutions, which are often wrongly and quite tendentiously presented by many people both inside and outside Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Republika Srpska has never violated the Dayton Accords or international law. Quite the contrary, it advocates for strict adherence to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution, as a part of the treaty that

leaves most competencies in the hands of the two entities and provides each of the three constituent peoples with safeguard mechanisms for protecting their rights. In addition, respect for international law means that High Representatives must be appointed under the procedures set out in annex 10 to the Accords and must act within their prescribed mandate.

Republika Srpska has never been in breach of the rule of law. On the contrary, it advocates for respect for our Constitution and the procedures it prescribes, and against the misuse or circumventing of our institutions and constitutional rules, as is for instance the case with the current draft resolution (A/78/L.67) on a remembrance day for Srebrenica, proposed for adoption in the General Assembly without any prior consultations or approval by the relevant and competent institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Republika Srpska does not undermine democracy. Quite the contrary, it is adamant that only our democratically elected institutions are entitled to enact laws and that those laws cannot and must not be imposed by non-elected foreign individuals.

Republika Srpska has always been committed to peace and stability and wishes to see Bosnia and Herzegovina as a truly democratic and sovereign State able to promote internal dialogue in order to seek balanced and Constitution-based solutions that can accommodate all in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unfortunately, the challenges we have been facing in recent years have threatened to undermine not only our Constitution but the security and stability of the country and even the entire Western Balkans. Those who persist in maintaining Bosnia and Herzegovina's quasi-protectorate status, where the rule of law and democratic governance are circumvented and autocratic and colonialistic foreign interventions prevent reconciliation between our peoples, are contributing directly to those threats.

There are currently several major challenges to peace and stability within Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of which are being manipulated and initiated by foreign and domestic political actors seeking to rewrite the Dayton Agreement and Bosnia and Herzegovina's Constitution and laws, as well as international law. Those threats to peace and stability can be divided into the following categories — interference in internal politics or political and democratic processes; the use

of threats of force or violence; disrespect for the rule of law, and violations of international law; and interference in elections and the disenfranchisement of voters.

Let me briefly elaborate on those challenges and threats.

At the centre of every dispute within Bosnia and Herzegovina is a fundamental issue of contention over the nature of the joint State. Under Dayton, as well as historically, Bosnia and Herzegovina could function only through consensus decision-making in which each of the three peoples were protected from being outvoted by the representatives of the other two peoples. Unfortunately, while the Serb and Croat peoples and their elected representatives have consistently fought for observing the Dayton Accords as they were written and signed, the Bosniaks and their elected representatives have favoured a much more unitary and centralized State, and the Bosnian political goal of the centralization of Bosnia and Herzegovina was often supported and furthered by foreign actors within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Through years of illegal decrees and coercion, the High Representative significantly altered the constitutional structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina established under the Dayton Accords. In effect, the High Representative's actions have interfered in the internal democratic processes and debates of the elected and legitimate representatives of the constituent peoples and entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The High Representative, mostly siding with Bosniak aspirations for a centralized State, has violated essential provisions of the Dayton Accords providing for the protection and equality of the constituent peoples, thereby destabilizing peace and security within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Every sovereign State and all democratically elected officials are protected from foreign interference in their internal affairs by the Charter of the United Nations and numerous international treaties and laws. Unfortunately, certain foreign diplomats within Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with Mr. Christian Schmidt, who presents himself as a kind of cross between a colonial governor and a classic despot, have continually, and increasingly destructively, interfered in the internal democratic and decision-making processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That interference has undermined the political consensus at the joint Bosnia and Herzegovina level that has guided and fuelled Bosnia

and Herzegovina progress on its path to European Union (EU) membership. A consensus on Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership in the EU is the only issue of importance that allows for difficult compromises and agreement among all of our Bosnia and Herzegovina political forces and elected leaders. As such it is essential to the maintenance of peace and stability within our joint State.

Other foreign actors, such as the Peace Implementation Council — which is not part of the relevant international law, as it was not envisaged by the Dayton Accords — and individual diplomats accredited within Bosnia and Herzegovina, have similarly interfered in internal affairs, and through that interference have assisted the High Representative's illegal actions. Even the draft resolution that has been proposed to the General Assembly on a Srebrenica remembrance day is a blatant example of how foreign interference and disrespect for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution undermine peace and stability. The draft resolution, which has been authored by certain countries and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ambassador to the United Nations, Zlatko Lagumdžija, reflects utter disregard for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, which is solely authorized to formulate Bosnia and Herzegovina foreign policy. There was no discussion or authorization by the Presidency of the draft resolution and there is no consensus among our peoples or at any level of governance about the text of the draft resolution, which has been intentionally withheld and concealed from the public. Most Council members' Governments know very well that this action is in contravention of the Dayton Accords but have simply decided to ignore it.

Some United Nations Members believe the draft resolution to be benign and an act of human compassion. However, it is clear that the intent behind it is anything but benign. In an interview on a Sarajevo television network last Friday, 26 April, Mr. Francis Boyle, a legal adviser to Bosniak political leaders, stated that once the Assembly adopts the draft resolution, all so-called pro-Bosnian forces should unite to use it to end Republika Srpska. That dangerous statement unfortunately reflects a goal prevailing among many Bosniak political leaders and clearly shows that the draft resolution would undermine peace and stability within Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is little wonder that this type of foreign interference undermines negotiations and compromise within Bosnia and Herzegovina, because it always favours one side, the Bosniaks.

And while Republika Srpska officials speak about the need to maintain peace and stability and resolve all pending political issues through democratic institutions, we are hearing threats and militaristic statements by Western diplomats in Sarajevo who are seeking to instil fear in Serbs, while at the same time giving credence to the hope of radical forces among the Bosniak political leadership that NATO can solve the problem of Republika Srpska by eliminating it.

At the same time, Bosniak officials such as Zukan Helez, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Minister of Defence, and Ramo Isak, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Minister of the Interior, are openly threatening violence and war. Among Mr. Helez's many inflammatory statements, two of the worst have been his claim that he is creating a reserve military force in Bosnia and Herzegovina and his call for weapons training to be introduced in Bosnia and Herzegovina's schools. Mr. Isak, on the other hand, has said that he would "lead 10 corps of fighters in eliminating Republika Srpska".

It should be noted that those types of threats and calls for violence are rarely condemned by Mr. Schmidt or by foreign ambassadors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should also be noted that the present danger of radical Islamic terrorist cells threatens peace not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans, but also in all of Europe. Only two weeks ago, law enforcement agents in the town of Zenica arrested one individual suspected of being part of a radical Islamist group in the Federation entity. Local media in Bosnia and Herzegovina also recently reported that Minister Helez, the Minister of Defence, authorized the use of shooting ranges belonging to the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Mostar by foreigners and local individuals associated with the radical Wahabi movement.

That is particularly dangerous and irresponsible as for many years Bosnia and Herzegovina has been marked by foreign media and international security reports as the most dangerous source of jihadist terrorism in Europe. Concern about the terrorist threats emanating from Bosnia and Herzegovina has been noted by many Western Governments and other sources. For example, the United States State Department wrote last year, "Terrorist groups continue plotting possible attacks in Bosnia and Herzegovina." In 2021, French President Emmanuel Macron, referring to the presence of jihadists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, called the

country "a ticking time bomb". According to data published by the Wilson Center in Washington, among European countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina had the highest per capita number of citizens who left to wage jihad in Syria and Iraq.

As we all know, the rule of law is one of the essential requirements for peace and for democratic governance. Unfortunately, it is consistently being violated and ignored within Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially by Mr. Schmidt and his enablers and accomplices in certain foreign embassies. The rule of law is also at the heart of the EU integration process, and EU and EU member State representatives are constantly stressing the importance of adhering to the rule of law, but they meekly criticize its consistent violation by Mr. Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt and his supporters claim that he has executive, judicial and legislative powers and that he is not accountable to any institution of Government or court of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In other words, they hold that he has absolute power and no accountability. It is very unclear how that aligns with any normal concept of the rule of law.

In an even greater affront to the rule of law, Mr. Schmidt amended the criminal code of Bosnia and Herzegovina to use it as a weapon to punish anyone who disobeys his dictates. Currently, the democratically elected President of the Republika Srpska, as well as a public official, are being prosecuted for fulfilling their constitutional and legal responsibilities, but in doing so, disobeying Mr. Schmidt's illegal orders.

The rule of law is also under attack by the threat and use of international sanctions by the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom. The threat and use of sanctions are used to intimidate elected and other Government officials, their families, private businesses and even media. Any leader who refuses to comply with Mr. Schmidt or who refuses to accept illegal changes to the Dayton Accords, are openly and persistently targeted with sanctions. Those sanctions are administrated without due process, that is without any formal charges or even a minute before a judge or in front of a court of law.

Banks are forced to close accounts and refuse services to those individuals who have not been formally charged with any crime. That is behaviour more common in the realms of organized crime and in no way resembles the behaviour of democratic States supportive of the international legal order or the rule of

law. That blatant lawless behaviour and utter defiance of the rule of law by Mr. Schmidt, his accomplices in Bosnia and Herzegovina and his enablers from various Governments, undermines the entire constitutional order in Bosnia and Herzegovina, weakens the institutions of Government and ignores the will of the citizens of our country. No doubt, the behaviour is a threat to peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In addition to the violations of the Dayton Accords, international law, the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the rule of law already described, there are continued efforts to disenfranchise voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most recent decree by Mr. Schmidt has forced changes to election law in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a clear attempt to interfere with and fix election results in upcoming local elections. Although billed as technical changes to election law to ensure greater election integrity, the decision in fact is political and calls into question the integrity of the entire election process, handing effective control and influence to an unelected foreigner. Once again, Mr. Schmidt violates the Dayton Accords, transfers authority from the entity Government to a centralized State body, the Central Election Commission, which both lacks legitimacy and legality.

Furthermore, he violates labour laws — and this is very important — by extending the terms of office of the members of the Central Election Commission beyond legal and mandatory retirement limits. The Central Election Commission is empowered to circumvent courts by being mandated by Mr. Schmidt to directly punish any perceived violations of his election law. Through the same dictate he also deprives some Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens of their constitutional and legal rights to run for elected office without due process or any legal remedy.

When the Republika Srpska National Assembly and elected representatives took legal measures to protect the Dayton Accords and the integrity of local elections within the Republika Srpska, elected officials were openly threatened with forced removal and various punishments by Mr. Schmidt and his accomplices. Fundamentally, by depriving elected officials and Government institutions of their constitutional authority and responsibility, the voters of Bosnia and Herzegovina are disenfranchised.

Every time Christian Schmidt imposes one of his edicts, mocking Bosnia and Herzegovina's democratic

constitutional order and the terms of the Dayton Accords, it is destabilizing to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Schmidt's repressive decrees, reckless edicts, threats and other interference have provoked crisis after crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Recent actions and rhetoric by Republika Srpska officials that certain foreign States have condemned were all provoked predictably by Mr. Schmidt's egregiously illegal actions. The fact is, when outsiders like Mr. Schmidt or those who support him engage in flagrantly abusive and illegal actions and seek to weaken, sanction or even imprison our democratically elected leaders, it has perfectly predictable consequences — it drives the Republika Srpska citizens and their elected officials to confront such wrongdoings.

It is clear that the continual violations of the Dayton Accords by Mr. Schmidt and his international and domestic accomplices represent threats to peace and directly undermine stability within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those violations must be condemned in every way, and they must be brought to an end as soon as possible.

I ask that all Council members, with renewed vigour, continue to support peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The President: I thank Ms. Cvijanović for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: I thank the Security Council very much for this opportunity. As High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is my mandate to oversee the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is my responsibility, and that is what I report on to the Security-General and the Security Council. The Security Council has repeatedly reiterated its support for my Office, most prominently in its resolutions 1031 (1995) and 1144 (1997).

With that said, I look forward to the Security Council semi-annual debate next month. I have already submitted my report, the sixty-fifth on Bosnia and Herzegovina, in anticipation of the debate. At the time, it will be an honour for me to brief this organ comprehensively on developments and, more importantly, trends over the past six months.

In addition to my statement, the topic of today's extraordinary meeting requires supplementary

interventions from my side. I appreciate the opportunity to present my assessment and will do so shortly.

Unfortunately, the letter of Ms. Cvijanović, which we can read, does not follow the principle of dedication to the facts and does not set forth the correct reading of the legal fundamentals of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Please understand that I am not prepared to respond to the words that we heard just now, which I would categorize as insults, which we heard just now. This is not the place for one to talk in such a way about the other. This is a place where one has to talk with the other. I therefore call for more precision and accuracy. Unfortunately, all I can see thus far is bad-faith misinterpretation. Let me stress, respect for the Dayton Peace Agreement requires me to be the guarantor of the existence of the entities that are constitutionally part of the international subject of law, the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These are the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska and the condominium of Brčko District, in accordance with the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and no one has any intention to dissolve any of those parts. I do not know the professor to whom Ms. Cvijanović was referring, but we can agree that he is absolutely wrong. Republika Srpska is an integrated part of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Are there threats to the Peace Agreement? Yes. The President and other officials of the Republika Srpska entity frequently assault Dayton through continuous inflammatory rhetoric about the dissolution of the State. The separation of Republika Srpska from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was secessionist, no matter what it is called. The President of the Republika Srpska entity, Milorad Dodik, recently publicly declared that “Bosniaks can have 25 per cent of the territory. The rest does not belong to them”, which some saw as a call for ethnic cleansing.

Maybe this is the place where we can talk about an understanding of colonialism. At a minimum, it is fundamentally anti-Dayton and unconstitutional and a rejection of the promise of the Peace Agreement for a multi-ethnic society, with a State and two entities. Are there challenges for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina? Yes. By way of example, Ms. Cvijanović, who introduced herself as one of the three members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an active member, joined the September 2023 provocative calls to protest and block the administrative inter-entity boundary line — the

boundary line between the two entities pursuant to the Dayton Peace Agreement — in an attempt to fabricate an international border where none exists. This runs counter to the Dayton Peace Agreement. I called her to order. By extension, are there threats to peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina? Regrettably, there are conscious attempts to endanger peace and stability that the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea) and the High Representative, both Dayton institutions, agree on in the assessment on stability.

According to the official assessment of EUFOR-Althea, “the security situation has steadily stabilized in military terms, but challenges arise from political tensions between the stakeholders”. I see these tensions stoked by the rhetoric and actions of representatives of the Republika Srpska entity. We got a taste of it a few minutes ago. Fortunately, those dangers have not, thus far, translated into violence. I regret to inform the Council and note with concern that violence against returnees of all ethnic origins has happened several times.

As High Representative, it is my assessment that Bosnia and Herzegovina can slip into serious political instability. But that can be prevented by coming back to fulfil the requirements under the Dayton Accords, especially at a time when the European Union offers a path to European integration.

It is also my assessment that this is, first and foremost, a consequence of the rhetoric and actions by the Republika Srpska’s political and institutional leadership to subvert the Peace Agreement. I see, instead, a possibility to move forward together, and have found many examples of that in voices coming out of Republika Srpska.

The warnings of escalation presented to us today are misleading. Those who themselves are driving the escalation should refrain from making such judgments. We see a systematic usurpation of the constitutional, legal and institutional framework of the State undermine the functionality of its institutions and robbing the State of its sovereignty. That is the key challenge that we should try to address through legislation, if necessary, as requested by annex 4 of the Constitution of the Dayton General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We must ensure equal respect and equal rights for all.

The guardians of the Peace Agreement and the constitutional legal order are currently being targeted. Equally inconsistent with the Peace Agreement is the rhetoric being utilized. In that connection, I point to the challenges posed by historical revisionism, the denial of genocide and other war crimes, the glorification of war criminals and the persistent advocacy for the dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which have created a divisive environment.

After long years of the inactivity of the responsible parliamentary bodies, I had the occasion to implement the proposals of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights with regard to election integrity and, in furtherance of the Dayton Peace Agreement, added that no sentenced war criminal — whether convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes — should be allowed to run for any public position because, as I expressed during my previous briefing to the Council (see S/PV.9319), I believe that it would have a negative effect on the society.

The security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is stable, but, as we see, fragile. Fortunately, thus far, there has been no response to provocations. The High Representative and EUFOR-Althea remain indispensable instruments of peace. When the path to European integration finally reaches the final stage, they will, indeed, have to see that the Dayton Accords need to be revisited. But for now, they must be supported and strengthened, not least in order to provide a strong message of reassurance and confidence to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country that is striving to become a member of the European Union. That is a good way to a promising future for it, and it can be achieved only on a basis of the Dayton Peace Agreement and a commitment to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and multi-ethnic character of its promises. There is a long and bumpy road ahead, and the country has only been able to make it to this point thanks to the Peace Agreement, which is the indispensable foundation for a peaceful future in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. It has been successful so far. It has brought an end to the war and the suffering. We therefore feel that we should dedicate all our efforts to continuing that.

I want to take this opportunity to remind all political actors of their obligation to fully comply with the Peace Agreement and their treaty obligations to cooperate with my Office. It is crucial that all

the country's citizens have confidence in stability, democracy, integrity and the possibility of a peaceful future for themselves and the next generation. Letters such as the one sent by Ms. Cvijanović do not serve the solemn duty of all who hold positions of responsibility for the country's welfare, in fact quite the opposite. It is not the people sitting and talking today in this Chamber whom we should be addressing but rather those who are seeing their confidence in the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina challenged. That is what we must all work together to respond to in a positive and constructive way.

The President: I thank Mr. Schmidt for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing, and we welcome the participation in today's meeting of Ms. Željka Cvijanović, the Republika Srpska member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Mr. Marko Djurić, the Special Envoy of the President of Serbia.

Russia requested today's meeting because of the sharp deterioration in the already fragile situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is soon likely to deteriorate even further. Ms. Cvijanović, the Serb member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, addressed a written letter to the members of the Security Council, including the Russian Federation, requesting the convening of an urgent meeting of the Council because there have been critically significant developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina — a part of which she represents — that could undermine the country's functionality and stability. The letter is certainly unusual, because Ms. Cvijanović is not the current Head of State. But what is also unusual is the political structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where responsibility for the country's future rests with the three-member Presidency, with the Head of State rotating every eight months. It is obvious that Ms. Cvijanović's letter is a sign of particular anxiety on the part of the country's Serb population and an attempt to prevent a negative situation. As members of the Security Council, we cannot remain indifferent to such cries for help.

We have often heard in this Chamber that the Council has an obligation to prevent conflicts, and many States say that this issue is at the top of their

agenda, as the Secretary-General often does too. In our view, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is precisely the kind of case in which the Council can prove its worth in terms of prevention. The Bosnian war claimed the lives of 100,000 people and is one of the most controversial chapters in history as far as the reaction of the international community — including the unacceptable and criminal behaviour of United Nations forces on the ground — is concerned. None of the parties in the war were simply pure and benevolent, and conversely, none were solely evil and bloodthirsty. Each side has scores to settle, and what happened in Srebrenica was not the only bloody episode in the war. We believe that the United Nations should not make the same mistakes again, and that the Council should respond to the situation. As a guarantor of the Dayton Agreement and a member of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council and of the Security Council, Russia has no right to turn a blind eye to it. In that regard, we are grateful to the Maltese presidency for convening today's meeting.

Almost 29 years ago, the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended a deadly inter-ethnic conflict. For almost 30 years it has provided security in the region. However, events of the past few years, and especially the past few months, are clear testament to systematic and brazen violations of the Agreement's fundamental provisions, and they have continued to occur. We have raised a number of them in the Security Council, and we also heard about them today from Ms. Cvijanović.

To begin with, to a large extent Bosnia and Herzegovina has now been deprived of the status of a sovereign and independent State. Frankly speaking, it is hard to wrap one's head around the fact that in the twenty-first century, in the centre of Europe and in the presence of democratically elected institutions, a citizen of Germany styling himself High Representative has the final say on what happens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Schmidt's *de facto* role is to act on behalf of a small group of foreign States in whose interests he does not hesitate to use the so-called Bonn powers. With their help, he can repeal any law or, on the contrary, enforce its application. He is behaving like an absolute monarch, and where Bosnia and Herzegovina is concerned, the West's warriors for democracy have not only failed to restrain him but have even encouraged him. In the past two and a half years he has succeeded in dividing the country more deeply than anyone before

him. Incidentally, it is important to point out that it was the United States and the United Kingdom that demanded the presence of this self-appointed "Bosnian autocrat" at today's meeting so that he could impose his expertise on the members of the Security Council. We will talk more about the distressing situation regarding Mr. Schmidt at a separate meeting in mid-May.

To cite another example, foreign judges arbitrarily appointed from outside the country continue to sit on the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2023, the statute of the Constitutional Court, which requires at least one judge from each constituent people to participate in decision-making, was rewritten by unconcealed manipulation and in violation of the law. There are now only six judges instead of nine. There are no Serbs at all, and Croats are represented by only one member. Whatever the qualifications of the foreign judges, such external tutelage over a sovereign State looks like the worst kind of colonial practice. We suggest that the members of the Council and everyone here take a moment to reflect on how they would feel if such a scheme were implemented in their countries.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina — which is already extremely tense, as a result of the points I mentioned — risks spiralling completely out of control because of the provocative activities that the country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations has been engaging in. We all know that he and some of his Western patrons are now promoting a draft resolution (A/78/L.67) on the events in Srebrenica in the General Assembly. The draft was initiated without the necessary consent of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a violation of the Constitution and therefore of the Dayton Agreement, of which the supreme law of the country is part. According to the Constitution, which has been shamelessly trampled on, foreign policy issues must be decided by the consensus of all three members of the Presidency. It is outrageous and unacceptable that two members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, as well as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, suddenly forgot about the need to obtain the consent of all three constituent peoples when they started to promote this more than provocative initiative. And as we heard today from Ms. Cvijanović, nearly a third of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is categorically against it, as the demonstrations by thousands of Serbs in the country have shown. There can be no doubt that these actions are purely political,

a deliberate violation of the Peace Agreement and a gross usurpation of the functions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency under the Dayton Agreement. Their consequences for the country are hard even to imagine, and we cannot rule out the possibility that they might not be confined to Bosnia and Herzegovina and could destabilize the entire Balkan region.

The fact that it is Germany — a country that in the twentieth century, during the Second World War, perpetrated the worst genocide in the history of humankind — that has taken the lead in the promotion of this exceedingly dangerous draft resolution looks like the height of cynicism. That horrific fact will remain forever etched in world history. It is also difficult to forget that Germany played a very active part in the fall of Yugoslavia and that in 1995 the purpose of Germany's first ever post-Second World War combat flights was bombing Sarajevo.

The General Assembly draft resolution on Srebrenica is a one-sided, politically charged document that has nothing to do with the stated goal of perpetuating the memory of the victims of the 1995 tragedy, with a view to achieving, as they say, national reconciliation. It is clear that the authors of the draft resolution are seeking to affirm, in the form of a General Assembly document, a perception of historic events that is in their interests alone. The draft resolution does not further the goal of advancing inter-ethnic reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in any way — not to mention the fact that putting it to a vote could lead to a chain reaction all over the world, for which we need only consider all the peoples everywhere who have skeletons in their closets, as well as wounds that are yet to heal fully and persistent grievances against each other. We urge the countries that have initiated and advanced the draft resolution to consider the responsibility they bear. The wounds in Bosnian society are far too raw and the country's problems too serious for this draft resolution to be put to the General Assembly. The peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina first need to reach a consensus among themselves in assessing their history. We are categorically against the draft resolution and call on all States of sound judgment to follow suit.

We anticipate heated criticism of our position from Western States today. We would like to believe that their crafty rhetoric and lofty words will mislead no one. We are all well aware of the abundant examples of Western intervention in the sovereign affairs of other States. It is worth recalling that, in the Balkans alone, NATO members bombed the territory of the former Yugoslavia

twice, first in 1995, which is directly related to the issue under discussion today, and again in 1999. However, when it comes to considering the responsibility of NATO members for those crimes, according to the logic of Western Governments international law simply does not exist. And still no one has been held to account when it comes to responsibility for the aggression against sovereign Yugoslavia. However, to be on the safe side, Western countries do everything they can to cowardly avoid even a discussion of the issue. We all saw that in March, when our Western colleagues simply blocked Russia's initiative to hold a Security Council meeting to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of NATO's aggression against Yugoslavia (see S/PV.9587). Was that a procedural matter? It clearly was not. And that is a perfect illustration of Western hypocrisy as well. Because although our French colleagues ignored the persistent regional consequences of those events and called for history to be left to the historians, we have heard no such calls from them in the case of the draft resolution on Srebrenica, about events that took place four years earlier.

The essence of the problem, and the reason why we proposed today's meeting, lies in the fact that in reality, the flouting of the Dayton Agreement's principles of the sovereignty and independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Sarajevo and Western Governments are so fond of invoking, began long ago and by those same parties. They are now doing all they can to advance the State's centralization, which completely contravenes the model of a polycentric structure for a multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina enshrined in the Dayton Accords and endorsed by the Security Council. The Dayton principle of the coexistence of the constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their equality in decision-making is fundamental to the post-conflict structure, the internal administrative architecture and the system aimed at balancing the interests of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats.

It is hard to ignore the fact that the Western acts aimed at undermining these foundations have led to an unprecedented increase in inter-ethnic disagreements and that the post-conflict settlement has been brought to an impasse. In reality, Western mediators in sheep's clothing are working to foment the conflict, striving to implement their own geopolitical agendas at the expense of the peoples of the Balkans and thereby discrediting the multilateral efforts to maintain lasting reconciliation and threatening Bosnia and Herzegovina's future as a State.

The Security Council has an obligation to prevent that dangerous turn of events. The international community as a whole needs to encourage and support an equal and mutually respectful dialogue between the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina without imposing its own approaches and solutions. We hope that today's meeting will make it possible to stop Bosnia and Herzegovina's slide towards the abyss of escalation, with unpredictable consequences for the Balkan region generally and possibly even the whole of Europe. It is vital to convey a clear message that the fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina lies exclusively in the hands of its peoples. It is they, not Western countries or the "Bosnia gauleiter" they have appointed, who should be making the decisions about their own future. We need to do everything we can to enable them to reach agreement and create all the necessary conditions for that, rather than fomenting conflicts and pitting them against one another.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank the briefers for their insights, and I would like to take this opportunity to assure High Representative Schmidt and his Office of Japan's unwavering support.

The brutal conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended in 1995. Since then, the country has transitioned from conflict to peace. Sustaining peace and stability is a prerequisite, not only for the country's future development and prosperity, but for the peoples of the Western Balkans and beyond. Japan, as a proud member of Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council, strongly supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity, regardless of ethnicity, religion or political affiliation. Our support for nation-building and national reconciliation efforts has continued to this day. However, notwithstanding our consistent policy of standing with Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have some concerns about recent developments around heightened tensions in the country. We reiterate that any attempt to undermine the Dayton Peace Agreement should be avoided. We appreciate the role of the High Representative in that regard and strongly urge all the parties to continue dialogue in a peaceful and constructive manner.

Let us renew our steadfast commitment to supporting the accession of the countries of the Western Balkans to the European Union, which will contribute to the stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region as a whole.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Cvijanović, the Serbian member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for her briefing. I also thank High Representative Schmidt and Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for their detailed briefings, and I welcome the presence of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia at this meeting.

Ecuador notes with concern the differences within the tripartite Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the tensions and divisions that challenge peaceful and multi-ethnic coexistence in the country. Progress on the many disputed areas and on a criteria-based approach will be achieved only when all the country's leaders engage in good faith in constructive dialogue, based on mutual respect, cooperation and the quest for a consensus that benefits all their citizens.

In that regard, I join the international community in calling on all stakeholders to constructively address the current political disputes, avoiding the use of language that could be inflammatory from ethnic or religious perspectives, as well as any form of rhetoric that may escalate tensions.

Ecuador stresses the importance of strengthening the implementation of the 1995 Dayton Agreement, which established the basis for a political future that respects the country's history and cultural diversity, and which is crucial to ensure respect for the aspirations and rights of the two entities and the three constituent peoples. It is desirable that all parties avoid unilateral actions that may violate the constitutional, legal and institutional order established by the Dayton Agreement.

As we await the conclusion of the 5+2 agenda, we call on all parties to cooperate with the Office of the High Representative.

For its part, Ecuador reaffirms its commitment to continue to support efforts to promote stability, peace and sustainable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.

I would like to conclude by congratulating the delegation of Malta for its excellent work and leadership during its presidency of the Council in April and wish every success to the delegation of Mozambique, which will assume the presidency from tomorrow.

Mr. Koudri (Algeria): As this is the last meeting of this month, I would like to convey Algeria's congratulations to Malta for its able presidency of the Security Council during the month of April.

I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča, Ms. Cvijanović and Mr. Schmidt for their remarks. I welcome the presence of the Special Envoy of the President of Serbia and of the Permanent Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

The signing, in December 1995, of the Dayton Peace Agreement was a critical step towards a peaceful and united Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Agreement succeeded in ending the war and in laying the foundations for a democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina — a country in which Bosnians, Croats and Serbs live side by side in harmony and under sovereign institutions.

Since then, the country has started its long journey towards stability and development. All its constituent peoples have joined synergic efforts, guided by the provisions of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its annexes.

In that regard, Algeria has always stressed the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Also, as a general principle that guides Algerian foreign policy, Algeria has always stood in favour and encouraged State-owned solutions to issues facing sovereign countries.

Within that guiding reference, I would like to stress the following.

First, it is important that the Dayton Peace Agreement be respected and upheld by all its parties. The Agreement remains the only consensual basis containing vital provisions for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Secondly, upholding governance and decision-making mechanisms in place, by all parties to the Agreement, is essential. In that vein, it is vital to work together and to preserve consensus, especially on issues that could lead to political tensions.

Thirdly, political parties and constituencies are highly encouraged to avoid antagonism and to favour dialogue and negotiations, especially about questions that could trigger controversy.

In conclusion, Algeria remains concerned about the complex current international context marked by the proliferation of tensions in many parts of the world and the polarization that is increasingly prevailing. Algeria continues to promote the virtues of inclusive and genuine dialogue and negotiations as the most effective way to overcome differences and bridge the divergent views.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*):

I would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Jenča, and the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also listened attentively to the remarks delivered by Ms. Cvijanović. We also wish to welcome the participation of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia in today's meeting.

Switzerland is committed to lasting peace and prosperity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country with which it has close ties. We stress the importance of political stability in the country.

While there are some challenges, as we have heard, we refer to the most recent assessment by the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea), according to which the security situation has steadily improved over the past few years. It is described as stable. The Council has entrusted the mission with the responsibility of monitoring and assessing the security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it has our full confidence. We believe that it is essential that EUFOR-Althea be able to continue its mandate without restrictions.

We take note of the internal political developments, which are mainly the result of differences between the parties concerned. In particular, Switzerland expresses its concern about the actions emanating from Republika Srpska, which promote division and undermine the institutions of the State, including the constitutional and legal order. We call on all leaders to prioritize the interests of the country as a whole and of all segments of its society. Credible efforts are needed to achieve that.

First, it is important to refrain from any secessionist action or threat. Challenges to the integrity of the country must cease immediately. The security, stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina can be achieved only if its territorial integrity is guaranteed. The Dayton Accords must therefore be fully respected.

Secondly, safeguarding human rights must be a priority. That includes freedom of expression and freedom of the media, as well as the right of assembly and association, and the prevention of restrictions on civil liberties. Any backsliding on human rights, democracy and the rule of law must be reversed.

Thirdly, the past must be addressed, and relevant international and local judicial decisions must be respected to ensure justice and accountability and to

promote social cohesion. Political leaders have a central responsibility in that regard, in particular in the search for truth and reconciliation.

Historical revisionism, the glorification of war criminals and the denial of genocide and war crimes have no place in a peaceful, multi-ethnic society. Switzerland rejects any attempt to do so. It also reiterates its full support for the institutions of justice and calls for respect for their decisions.

Switzerland commends Bosnia and Herzegovina on the progress it has made with key reforms. The European Commission's recommendation to open accession negotiations marks an important step. We encourage all parties to focus on the opportunities arising from that decision. It is high time to prioritize the reduction of tensions, to engage in constructive dialogue and to make a genuine effort to implement the reforms necessary for the well-being of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The next debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina in two weeks' time will provide an opportunity to discuss political developments, in particular the local elections this autumn. We look forward to High Representative Schmidt's report in the coming days to that end and underline our support for his mandate.

In conclusion, it is essential that we, as Council members, ensure that our deliberations foster a calm environment and lead to constructive solutions. Switzerland remains committed to working towards that goal.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I want to begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing. I welcome the participation and briefing by High Representative Schmidt today on such short notice. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and note the participation of Ms. Cvijanović in her personal capacity.

Today's meeting, called by the Russian Federation, is an attempt to use the Council to amplify one party's ethno-nationalist rhetoric and threats. The Council is supposed to promote international peace and security. Instead, Russia's using the Council to undermine it for Russia's own ends.

The United States encourages all levels of the Government to work together to seize the opportunity provided by the decision of the European Union

(EU) to open accession negotiations for Bosnia and Herzegovina. All leaders working towards reforms for a more democratic and prosperous future will advance the country's EU candidacy and Euro-Atlantic integration. To that end, the United States will continue to advocate for the secure, democratic, and prosperous future that its citizens have chosen and deserve, firmly anchored in the Euro-Atlantic community of nations.

We encourage leaders to avoid ethno-nationalist agendas and focus on accountable, transparent and efficient governance. The destabilizing actions of certain politicians threaten Bosnia and Herzegovina's Euro-Atlantic integration, its democratic institutions and the Dayton Peace Agreement. The continuation of actions by some political leaders, including Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik, that deny that genocide was committed during the war is a serious concern. Let me be clear: Srebrenica was not simply "a mistake," as he stated. It is an indisputable fact that genocide was committed in Srebrenica. That has been established by international criminal tribunals and the International Court of Justice.

That is why we welcomed the decision by the High Representative to prohibit persons who have committed genocide from standing for elections. That should not be controversial, and every United Nations Member State should stand behind that decision.

Politicians pushing these divisive narratives are doing so in pursuit of narrow personal and political gains. Republika Srpska's President Dodik is the most egregious example. He has taken a series of steps to undermine State institutions and regularly calls for the dissolution of the country. His dangerous actions and secessionist rhetoric threaten peace and stability in the region. The United States has sanctioned Dodik and those who enable his corrupt and anti-Dayton actions in order to induce him to operate within Bosnia and Herzegovina law and the governmental structures created by the Dayton Peace Agreement.

We are very appreciative of the High Representative's work, which is vital to keeping the international community informed about the ongoing efforts to ensure enduring stability and prosperity — not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in the region. The Office of the High Representative plays a central role in ensuring the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement and has been instrumental in ensuring that key institutions, including

the judiciary, continue to function despite the efforts of certain politicians to undermine them. Until Bosnia and Herzegovina fulfils the agreed-upon criteria, the Office must remain.

The United States remains steadfast in our support of Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, territorial integrity and multi-ethnic character. We will continue to support the Dayton Peace Agreement as the foundation of peace and push back on anti-Dayton actions. We will also support the Office of the High Representative as it defends Dayton, weakens ethno-nationalists, strengthens the State and combats corruption.

In conclusion, let me congratulate you and your team, Madam President, on a very successful presidency. We wish Mozambique much success as it assumes the presidency.

Ms. Persaud (Guyana): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča, Mr. Schmidt and Ms. Cvijanović for their briefings and welcome the participation of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia in today's meeting.

Next year will mark 30 years since the signing of the Dayton Agreement. The governance and peace structures of the Agreement continue to provide a solid framework for the achievement of reconciliation and peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, its uneven implementation, divisive rhetoric and rising political and ethnic tensions are stymieing the country's development.

I wish to make three points in that regard.

First, the Dayton Peace Agreement contributed significantly to ending the devastating war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while establishing it as a sovereign State. The signing of the Agreement represented a commitment to peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Balkan region.

It is therefore imperative that efforts continue towards its full implementation. That can be achieved only through constructive, inter-ethnic dialogue conducted in the interests of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Guyana underscores the need for Bosnia's sovereignty and territorial integrity to be respected.

Secondly, the use of threats of secession as a political instrument, particularly in a multi-ethnic society, can have far-reaching and long-lasting repercussions. It can exacerbate tensions and lead to conflict, social

fragmentation, political instability and disrupt the economic activities of a country, reversing national development. We urge all parties to work assiduously to ensure that those effects are mitigated, diversity is respected and nation-building is prioritized.

Thirdly, we urge the parties to engage in dialogue and redouble efforts around genuine reconciliation and deter all actions that could lead to instability and conflict. A platform for constructive dialogue and the peaceful resolution of diverging views that threaten hard earned peace and security is now more relevant than ever.

In conclusion, Guyana calls on all parties to act responsibly and to make all efforts towards the de-escalation of current tensions and to recommit to the full implementation of the Dayton Agreement. I also take this opportunity to commend you and your team, Madam President, for Malta's presidency for the month of April and extend our best wishes to Mozambique for the month of May.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): We thank Malta's presidency for convening this urgent Council briefing on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Allow me also to extend our warmest congratulations to Malta for its successful presidency during the month of April. We extend our thanks to the briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenča, Ms. Željka Cvijanović and Mr. Christian Schmidt, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina — for their comprehensive updates. We acknowledge the presence of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia in today's meeting.

Nearly three decades after the Bosnian war, the country remains mired in unresolved tensions. The once multi-ethnic and diverse society has been fractured, as political leaders continue to promote divisive and nationalist agendas, undermining stability and dashing hopes for progress. The persistent challenges have severe consequences for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Human rights violations, attacks against returnees and discrimination persist, casting a dark shadow over the country's development.

Drawing from Mozambique's own experience, we affirm that there can be no nation-building without true national reconciliation, healing and trust-building or without deep political commitment. The failure to address Bosnia and Herzegovina's painful history has created fertile grounds for radicalization and violent

extremism to take root. We note with great concern that the fundamental right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, which is a cornerstone of democracy and reconciliation, is not adequately guaranteed or protected by current legislation. In the light of the ongoing situation, we call on all the parties involved to renounce nationalist and divisive rhetoric and uphold the principles and objectives enshrined in the General Framework Agreement for Peace and the Constitutional Framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the so-called Dayton Accords. Comprehensive transitional justice measures, including urgent substantive reforms in the rule of law, are crucial to preventing further deterioration and fostering stability. There is an urgent need for concerted efforts to repair the harm resulting from past violence and to work constructively to foster stability, inclusion, ownership, solidarity, justice, cooperation and sustainable development. Achieving those vital goals is essential to the welfare and prosperity of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We therefore call on the international community to sustain its support to the promotion of peaceful and multi-ethnic coexistence in the country.

In conclusion, persistent efforts must be made to maintain peace and democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite the lingering tensions.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): We thank Mr. Miroslav Jenča, the Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, and Mr. Christian Schmidt, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for their briefings, and we have taken note of the statement by Ms. Željka Cvijanović.

Slovenia is a sincere friend and strong supporter of Bosnia and Herzegovina and all its peoples. We stood by the country during its devastating war and have continued to do so ever since. Slovenia is an ardent advocate for Bosnia and Herzegovina's future membership of the European Union, because we believe that its people deserve to live and prosper in an organization built on peace, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Based on that belief, we spared no effort in helping to initiate the European Union accession negotiations in March. The prospect of membership is a guarantee of Bosnia and Herzegovina's long-term stability, peace and development. Future membership represents a powerful motive for conducting reforms that will enable all ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and especially its young people, to follow their dreams in their own country. We were encouraged

to hear from Ms. Cvijanović that there is a consensus in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the country's accession to the European Union, a welcome indication that Bosnia and Herzegovina wishes to join Europe as much as the European Union wishes to integrate it.

Nearly three decades have passed since the end of the war. Peace would not have been achieved without the involvement of the international community, including the Security Council. The Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995 remains the cornerstone of peace and of the country's post-war institutional framework. The Council's role is in the maintenance of peace and security, and we should avoid entering situations in which we might have the reverse effect. Delegitimizing the presence of the international community and perpetuating conflicting narratives are exactly the kinds of situations that we must avoid. The Council must be careful not to give a platform to an alternative, politically biased narrative about the situation, which only deepens the divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We would do better to focus on upholding the implementation of the Dayton Agreement and supporting international instruments and mechanisms deriving from it. That also means fully supporting the work and assessment of the High Representative, mandated by the Peace Agreement, and supporting the decisions of the International Court of Justice, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina's courts. And we have no option but to trust the assessment of the military operation of the European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is mandated by the Council to maintain a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and which describes the situation and the environment as safe.

At the same time, we must keep the focus on what is most important for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that is its European future. We call on all of the country's leaders to act in good faith and engage in constructive cooperation to bring the European Union reforms forward. That is the only way to secure peace and long-term stability, and it is what all international stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina and on the Council must keep in focus as well.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I too thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča, Ms. Cvijanović and High Representative Schmidt for their respective briefings. My delegation welcomes the participation of the delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia in today's meeting.

The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Any Council member has the right to call a meeting in that regard, and of course the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the items on the Council's agenda. However, given that the Council's regular briefing on the country is already scheduled for two weeks' time, it still seems doubtful whether there was an urgent need to hold another briefing today.

It has been nearly three decades since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, but sustainable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains elusive. In order to avoid repeating the pain of the past and to move towards a future that benefits everyone, it is essential not to forget the past and to learn lessons from it. The Dayton Peace Agreement was the product of the efforts to end the past tragedies of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and commitment to the country's unity as one sovereign nation is the central foundation of that hard-earned Agreement. However, if it is not implemented, all the efforts that have been undertaken will count for nothing. In that respect, we call on all parties to redouble their efforts to ensure its full implementation. The Republic of Korea reiterates its unequivocal support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are also concerned about the recent increase in inflammatory action and rhetoric in the region. In that regard, we oppose any action or rhetoric that undermines or jeopardizes the Dayton Peace Agreement. If we are to turn a new page and move forward, it is incumbent on all political leaders to encourage tolerance and inter-ethnic understanding.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea urges all parties to redouble their sincere efforts to advance a positive future that will include all residents as part of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Malta for convening today's meeting at the request of the Russian Federation, and Assistant Secretary-General Jenča for his briefing. I also listened attentively to the statement by Her Excellency Ms. Željka Cvijanović, the Serb member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and I welcome the presence of the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia at today's meeting,

Pursuant to the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina established a political system featuring two entities and tripartite inter-ethnic consultation and coexistence, setting in motion an important process of

peace, reconciliation and national rebuilding. In the past three decades, the Dayton Peace Agreement has played a unique role in promoting inter-ethnic harmony in Bosnia and Herzegovina and peace and stability in the Western Balkans. The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as established under the Dayton Peace Agreement, is mandated to oversee the implementation of the Agreement. The Bonn powers, which were later entrusted to the High Representative, are intended to ensure better implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement and help Bosnia and Herzegovina achieve stability and development.

In recent years the appointment of the High Representative and invocations of the Bonn powers have caused tensions and disagreements, exacerbating tensions among the various communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina rather than defusing them. We reiterate that the High Representative system and the Bonn powers are both special arrangements designed for special times. They should not be considered lasting arrangements, let alone permanent ones. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a sovereign State, and its internal affairs should ultimately be managed independently by its own people.

It is worrisome that the tripartite inter-ethnic consultative system established under the Dayton Agreement have been violated and challenged recently, further deepening ethnic divisions and having a negative impact on the situation in the country. The international community should maintain a balanced and prudent attitude, fully heed and respect the views and concerns of the three ethnic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, encourage and promote dialogue, consultation and national reconciliation and do more to ensure peace and development in the Western Balkans and Europe generally. When external forces pick sides or impose solutions or even unilateral sanctions, that only exacerbates the inter-ethnic tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, rather than helping bridge inter-ethnic divisions in the country. We call on all the parties concerned to adopt a prudent, responsible approach and to refrain from exerting excessive pressure and interfering in Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal affairs.

The armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s is a dark chapter in history, marked by casualties among innocent civilians from all ethnic groups, as well as by the Srebrenica massacre, which was even more deplorable. China has always advocated for ensuring that history is never forgotten

and that we keep learning from it in order to prevent such tragedies from recurring. Meanwhile, we hope that all the ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina can embrace tolerance and reconciliation, maximize consensus, look ahead in unity and solidarity and work together to maintain peace and stability and promote socioeconomic development.

China has taken note of the General Assembly draft resolution (A/78/L.67) on the establishment on an international day of reflection and commemoration of the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica, and of all the controversy surrounding it. We are of the view that the sponsors of the draft resolution should fully consult with the key parties concerned and the United Nations membership and move the process forward on a basis of consensus. Steamrolling a draft resolution marked by major differences is inconsistent with a spirit of promoting reconciliation and harmony within Bosnia and Herzegovina and among the countries of the region. It is inconsistent with the desire to maintain peace and stability in the Western Balkans and Europe at large, and it is inconsistent with the original purpose of demonstrating Member States' solidarity through the designation of international days. China is ready to continue its constructive engagement in the relevant discussions and to work with all parties to facilitate a proper resolution of the matter.

China's position on the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina is consistent and clear. We have always respected the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We hope that all of its communities can prioritize the interests of the entire country and all its peoples, enhance dialogue, build trust, achieve reconciliation and work together to maintain political stability and promote economic development. China will continue to develop friendly relations with all ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina and play a constructive role in maintaining peace and stability in the country and the region.

I would like to conclude by taking this opportunity to congratulate Malta on a successful presidency this month and to wish Mozambique every success next month.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): We are grateful to High Representative Schmidt and to the Assistant Secretary-General for their briefings. We also took careful note of the briefing in her personal capacity by

Ms. Cvijanović, and we welcome the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to the Chamber.

First, with the Council set to discuss Bosnia and Herzegovina in two weeks, we do not believe that the current situation warranted urgent discussion. Despite current tensions, the overall situation remains stable, and we welcome that. The European Council's decision in March to grant Bosnia and Herzegovina European Union accession status is an important step, including given the wider geopolitical situation, and reflects the importance of the Government's actions to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We encourage the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to work together on the necessary steps to enable the negotiating framework to be adopted. At the same time, we call on the leaders of Republika Srpska to cease their secessionist rhetoric and actions, which are a threat to that progress. Those provocative actions are increasing tensions between communities and undermining State institutions, and they run counter to the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Pursuant to the Dayton Agreement, the High Representative is mandated to oversee the implementation of its civilian aspects. We fully support his efforts to address the challenges and promote peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Secondly, we are deeply concerned about the rise in denials of genocide and the glorification of war criminals. True reconciliation cannot be built on a reluctance to accept and come to terms with the actions of the past. What happened in Srebrenica was one of the worst crimes in Europe since the Second World War. In its judgment of April 2004, the Appeals Chamber of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia found unanimously that genocide was committed in Srebrenica. That is not a political statement. It is the judgment of an international court, and to say so is not a criticism of Serbia. Judges at international courts have been clear that it is not a collective judgment on the Serbian people, as some have claimed. As one presiding judge at the International Tribunal stated, "I seek to judge an accused. I do not judge a people". We fully support all efforts to promote reconciliation for all of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to learn the lessons of history to ensure that this terrible event is never repeated.

Let me finish by congratulating you, Madam President, on a very successful presidency for the month of April and by offering Mozambique our full support for its efforts in the month of May.

Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault (France) (*spoke in French*): By way of preliminary remarks, France notes that the modality of today's meeting is unusual. Russia has convened an emergency meeting and has painted a picture of a Bosnia and Herzegovina on the brink of collapse. France does not share that dramatic assessment of the situation, even if we find the attitude of the leaders of Republika Srpska worrisome. The decision of the European Council last month to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina sent a clear message that the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, like that of the whole of the Western Balkans, is in the European Union, and will be to the benefit of all their citizens. France regrets that the decision was followed by serious threats to the country's unity from the President of the Republika Srpska entity, Mr. Milorad Dodik.

France condemns the adoption on 19 April by the Republika Srpska National Assembly of draft laws on elections, referendums and immunity, as well as one on foreign agents. Those measures are an attack on the constitutional order of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The draft law on foreign agents is damaging to the maintenance of an environment that benefits civil society, the media and freedom of expression. France calls on the leaders of Republika Srpska to put an end to those initiatives, which harm the country's prospects of joining the European Union.

We do not share Russia's version of a seriously threatened security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the President of the Republika Srpska entity's nationalist rhetoric and threats of secession are endangering the stability of the country and the region. As a witness to the Dayton-Paris Accords, France will continue to support the unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we hope that all witnesses to the Accords will do the same.

It is regrettable that Russia is once again seeking to exploit the work of the Security Council against the backdrop of the draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly on the designation of an international day of reflection and commemoration of the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica. As we have said before, the draft resolution is not an indictment of any particular people. It invites us above all to comply with our duty to remember and aims to prevent such acts from recurring. The draft resolution

promotes reconciliation on the basis of respect for and solidarity with all victims, regardless of their ethnicity or religious beliefs.

For France, an international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains necessary for the stability of the country and the region, in accordance with the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since 2004, the European Union has played a fundamental role in that area with the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to which France is actively contributing. As far as the civilian component is concerned, France supports the High Representative's mandate.

France calls on all those involved in Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from any provocation that could sow discord. We call on all political forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina to work together in order to get back on track with the reforms necessary for the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole to the European Union.

We take this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam President, on your presidency of the Council and to wish Mozambique all the best in its presidency next month.

Mr. George (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this briefing. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Jenča, Ms. Cvijanović and Mr. Christian Schmidt for their insightful briefings. I welcome the participation of the representatives of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia.

Sierra Leone welcomes the opportunity for the Council to be briefed of any emerging issues which may threaten the hard-earned peace and progressive implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Agreement.

In that regard, we would like to emphasize four key issues.

First, Sierra Leone acknowledges the territorial integrity and the internationally recognized borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We further note that the establishment of the entities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska was not intended to perpetuate ethnic or political divides or reinforce separatist sentiments. We therefore deplore all actions that threaten the territorial integrity and stability of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are of the view that it is important to honour and respect Bosnia and Herzegovina's culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse heritage. In that vein, we call for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to embrace their multi-ethnic identity, which continues to generate and reflect a resilient and progressive nation.

Secondly, Sierra Leone commends the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina on progress made in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, particularly the creation of its Constitution, the entrenched provision of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the establishment of a Constitutional Court.

Sierra Leone also commends the steps taken for Bosnia and Herzegovina's candidacy for accession to the European Union (EU). We further welcome the incremental steps to be undertaken for the country's alignment with EU standards, particularly where they promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies. We therefore appeal to all stakeholders to refrain from taking any action that undermines the credibility and functionality of those institutions.

Thirdly, Sierra Leone acknowledges the role of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, advancing the work of the High Commissioner and supporting the objectives of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board.

We are mindful of the role of regional organizations in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations on regional arrangements. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, we support the role of credible regional actors in supporting State effectiveness and peace and security in the region.

Our fourth point is the critical role of the Council in supporting the de-escalation of tensions and encouraging dialogue among the key actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is particularly key, given the Government's commitment to undertaking economic, judicial and political reforms that are critical to attaining lasting peace and security, as well as sustainable socioeconomic growth in the region.

We therefore emphasize the importance of the Council working cooperatively with all other actors within the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board for full implementation of the 5+2 agenda across the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular in resolving the deepening gridlock between State actors and the Office of the High Representative.

Finally, Sierra Leone urges all Member States, regional actors and entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to direct their will and effort towards delivering on the collective promise and responsibility of "never again" for the benefit of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Let me take this opportunity congratulate Malta on its successful presidency for this month. We wish Mozambique all the best for the upcoming presidency and assure it of our full support.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I thank High Representative Schmidt for his briefing and have taken note of the views expressed by Ms. Cvijanović. I also welcome the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia to the Chamber.

Malta welcomes the progress achieved by Bosnia and Herzegovina during the past few months and positively notes the sustained overall stability in the country. However, Malta remains worried by some setbacks, which risk jeopardizing progress. In that context, we are monitoring the situation on the ground and hope that any rifts at the political level do not in any way translate into heightened tensions.

We call on the country's leadership to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and divisive actions, as those would seriously threaten peace and stability in the country and potentially in the wider region. We reiterate our position on the importance of sustained stability in the Western Balkans, which is interlinked with the overall prosperity of the region.

Malta reaffirms its unwavering support for the Dayton Agreement. We urge all parties within Bosnia and Herzegovina to fully and scrupulously respect and uphold the principles enshrined within it, including the power-sharing framework, and work in a constructive manner within agreed parameters. In that context, we have strong reservations about the value of this meeting in contributing to defusing tensions, especially since it was neither requested nor supported by Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We reiterate our support for the mission and mandate of the High Representative. At the same time, we do acknowledge the reservations made by one entity on the work of the High Representative. However, we reiterate that concerns shall be addressed jointly and in a spirit of cooperation among the country's leadership. Inflammatory narratives and unilateral actions will exacerbate disputes, rather than solve them.

We also renew our support for the role of the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining security and stability and believe that its presence is crucial for preserving the present stable situation.

Malta welcomes the recent decision to open European Union (EU) accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and continues to support its commitment towards achieving its goal of European Union membership. We encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina to strive to adopt the necessary reforms and strengthen the country's constitutional, electoral and judicial frameworks that will ensure meaningful progress towards EU membership. The reforms must be inclusive and based on the rule of law. Adequate representation of women in all Government institutions and an inclusive public administration are of paramount importance.

We are likewise strongly concerned about recent legislative initiatives which run counter to the constitutional order of the country and its EU path. We strongly encourage all parties to focus efforts on enacting coherent legislation through coordinated institutions. That is the only way to achieve adequate reforms and overcome future challenges. A strong commitment from all parties towards reconciliation and the strengthening of cohesion is urgently needed. In that context, Malta, also in its capacity as 2024 Chair-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), encourages parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to make full use of the OSCE structures and presence on the ground, including its distinct tool kit to promote dialogue and defuse tensions.

In conclusion, Malta continues to strongly support Bosnia and Herzegovina's unity and territorial integrity and urges responsible and sensible leadership in the country that strives towards cooperation based on respect for all members of society, with a clear view towards EU accession. Serious efforts are needed to engage in a constructive and inclusive dialogue that guarantees peaceful coexistence.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We listened carefully to the statements delivered by our Security Council colleagues and have come to the

disappointing conclusion that our Western colleagues, first and foremost, the Western permanent members of the Council, unfortunately, have absolutely no interest in the stabilization around Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their tactic is to blame one of the constituent peoples and besmirch its history and leadership, while turning a blind eye to the egregious violations of the Dayton Agreement and the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. None of them today uttered a word about it. What is more, they invited Mr. Schmidt, the embodiment of those violations, who clearly does not repent for his subversive actions, to participate in this meeting.

We wonder what the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina would say today about the violations committed by Mr. Schmidt, by the two members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and by himself. Of course, the West is hiding its illegal actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina behind a virulent campaign to blame Russia for allegedly instrumentalizing Security Council discussions in pursuit of its parochial interests. But to what end? In the narrative of those countries, it is to spread Russian disinformation. That is what we heard today. This is nothing new. We have seen these machinations in other situations, when Western countries try to propagate their so-called "rules-based order", which, as we know, has absolutely nothing to do with international law.

Clearly, Washington and Brussels cannot imagine the consequences of this hopeless and extremely dangerous policy for both Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbours. The sooner they abandon it and return to the implementation of the Dayton Accords, the better the chances for preserving regional and European stability.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Lagumdžija (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on the exceptional conduct of the presidency for the month of April. You certainly had your fair share of challenging issues and far more urgent matters to address, so we regret that in the final day of your presidency, you have before you, quite unnecessarily, a situation that merits no urgency whatsoever.

The regular meeting on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is already scheduled for 15 May, as we heard. As such, it is quite concerning that the Council is being instrumentalized as a public stage, to the detriment of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has nothing

to do with concerns about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but with abuse of power in the Council in order to perpetuate a one-sided and dangerous narrative.

The Russian Federation repeatedly demonstrated its concern with one part of Bosnia and Herzegovina alone. Let me recall the words of the Russian Permanent Representative from May 2023:

“Dayton’s multi-ethnic vision for the country is in danger. The Western countries’ classic neo-colonial Western approach in Bosnia and Herzegovina poses a real threat to the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Worse, it is undermining the very foundations of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s statehood and violating the fundamental rights of its constituent peoples, thereby ratcheting up the tensions yet again.” (S/PV.9319, *p. 13*)

Today is an opportunity for Russia to explain how today’s meeting upholds a multi-ethnic version of the country if we are, under the pretence of urgency, listening to a private person from one administrative unit in Bosnia and Herzegovina speak about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. How is that in conformity and in support of the Dayton Peace Accord? How is it not a violation of the rights of at least two constituent peoples, if not of all three, and others, as well as of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, determined as such by the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, annexed to the Dayton Peace Agreement? If anything, the Russian Federation is unnecessarily stirring up tensions.

Let me be more precise. According to the Dayton Peace Accords and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution, the name is not the joint State Bosnia and Herzegovina, as we heard so many times today, but the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The name of one of the two entities is Republika Srpska, as stated in the Dayton Agreement.

First, the very fact that the Russian Federation circulated a letter from the member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina from Republika Srpska (see S/2024/333), in full awareness that by circulating that letter as a pretext for this meeting, both Russia and that member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina are violating the Dayton Peace Agreement, speaks of — to say the least — its partiality.

Absent a clear request from the Head of State, in this case, the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or communication to that effect from

the Security Council-mandated mission, the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR-Althea), on the ground, supporting urgent action from the Council, the Russian Federation resorted to the procedural misuse of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. In doing so, Russia also further degraded the institution of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

While the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina legally establishes that the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall consist of entities — the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, it does not leave room for the so-called sovereignty of the entities, in accordance with international law, and the entities’ powers are in no way an expression of statehood, but are derived from the allocation of powers through the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is also the position of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose decisions are final and binding.

Therefore, expressing the standpoint of an administrative territorial unit in Bosnia and Herzegovina, instead of the official State positions, as is the case here with the letter in question, has no legal foundation and is, again, in violation of the relevant provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Let me illustrate some elements of ignorance related to the constitutional settings contained in the letter transmitted by the Russian Federation that launched today’s meeting. The letter is from the member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina from Republika Srpska. It starts by incorrectly describing the “competencies of BiH institutions in only six areas”. But upon counting them, it is clear that only five are listed. However, we neither recognize either five or six competencies because paragraph 1, entitled “Responsibilities of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, of article III of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution, entitled “Responsibilities of and Relations Between The Institutions Bosnia and Herzegovina And the Entities” lists precisely, one after another, line after line, the competencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions in 10 areas — not five or six.

Paragraph 5 of the same article, entitled, “Additional Responsibilities”, is very important. Its sub-paragraph (a) sets forth that,

“Bosnia and Herzegovina shall assume responsibility for such other matters as are agreed by the Entities; are provided in Annex 5 through

8 of the General Framework Agreement; or are necessary to preserve the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, and international personality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the division of responsibilities between the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additional institutions may be established as necessary to carry out such responsibilities.”

Just the list, in the part on our constitutional setting, of the institutions established in the last two decades is very long. To illustrate, I will name just a few: the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Indirect Taxing Authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Prosecutor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Border Service of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Intelligence-Security Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and so on.

Furthermore, the Charter of the United Nations provides that Member States address the organs and bodies of the United Nations — and those are always States, not their administrative territorial units. Continuously trying to introduce this practice related to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a direct attack on the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The independent, sovereign and integral State of Bosnia and Herzegovina is subject to international law, and the creation and implementation of foreign policy does not come under the competence of the entities.

Secondly, I will concede that Bosnia and Herzegovina has been confronting several critical challenges for the past few years, but that is predominantly due to the course of action repeatedly undertaken by the Government of Republika Srpska. It represents an unprecedented attack against the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The authorities of Republika Srpska have taken continuous action that undermines the constitutional order and State institutions, increases inter-ethnic tensions through divisive and inflammatory rhetoric and limits the freedom of assembly and expression, which has contributed to increased political and ethnic tensions throughout the country.

The ruling coalition in Republika Srpska has started to implement measures creating the preconditions for a potential future secession of Republika Srpska from Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were outlined in a joint statement signed by the ruling parties of Republika

Srpska on 24 April outlining a series of steps that could create such preconditions. The most recent is the adoption of the election law proposal of the Republika Srpska, as mentioned by the High Representative, whereby Bosnia and Herzegovina State competencies in the field of elections in the Assembly of the Republic of Srpska are assigned to the entity. But more importantly, the current attacks of the Government of Republika Srpska have targeted the two civilian institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina defined by the Dayton Peace Agreement: the Office of the High Representative and the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which both have the mandate and the means to prevent secessionism, as defined precisely by the Dayton Agreement. Until we change our Constitution towards that of a fully functioning modern European State, those institutions will remain as guarantors of the Peace Agreement.

I would like to note the following: from the text of annex 10, it is clear that the appointment is not made by the Security Council, though it must be consistent with the relevant resolutions. The Peace Implementation Council Steering Board’s practice clearly demonstrates that the High Representative is appointed to the position upon designation by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board and that that practice is consistent with Security Council resolutions, starting with resolution 1031 (1995) of 15 December 1995. As for the Constitutional Court, Republika Srpska’s efforts to limit the jurisdiction of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Constitutional Court to only one part of the country are unlawful attempts to change the country’s constitutional order and are irresponsible to say the least. Calling on the judges representing the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Constitutional Court to present their resignations represents an unfathomably dangerous attempt to recreate the anti-constitutional methods used by the war criminal Radovan Karadžić, who was convicted of genocide by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1992.

Unfortunately, after many years of denying the verdicts of United Nations courts on the genocide committed against the Bosniaks and publicly glorifying convicted war criminals, which goes against all civilizational values, authorities in Republika Srpska are now starting to apply the methods used by war criminals by demolishing the State and constitutional order of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those serious violations of the Dayton Peace Agreement in fact

threaten peace and stability in the country and the region and are a detriment to a viable and sustainable future among civilized nations.

I will make no further comment on the part of the letter that initiated today's debate, since there will be more time to have an in-depth discussion on 15 May, when members will have before them a report of the High Representative in the presence of the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Denis Bećirović.

That brings me to my third and final point and the real reason for this unprecedented abuse of the Council: the draft resolution on the international day of reflection and commemoration of the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica. The sole purpose of today's meeting is to put pressure on the sponsors of the draft resolution to withdraw the text, as requested yesterday in a letter from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations. It omits to say, however, that in two rounds of consultations Serbia did not submit a single word of substantive comments, nor did it propose any amendments. I was told during one of the discussions I had with one of the representatives of Serbia that they can engage on the text only after one word is removed: "genocide". The culture of remembering the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica is not, and must not be, a culture of denial, but a culture of memory, to ensure that genocide is never repeated by anyone.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a full Member of the United Nations since its independence, together with Slovenia and Croatia, which joined on the very same day, and it is our obligation to respect and implement the legally binding judgments of United Nations permanent courts and ad hoc tribunals. In article IX of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the parties — Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia, and later Serbia and Montenegro — undertook obligations to respect and cooperate "in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian law".

Let me be very clear: the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina — with or without consensus — or anyone else, whether minister or ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, cannot engage in discussions on Srebrenica that deny outright the genocide committed there, nor does it have the authority to question or to be above the final proclamations of the judicial institutions of the United Nations. Such an action would need to

be preceded by amendments to the Dayton Peace Agreement, the Constitution and finally the criminal code of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which prohibits the public approval, denial or justification of the crime of genocide.

Therefore, any action contrary to the criminal code of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a criminal offence in my country. As an example, just yesterday, the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina confirmed charges by the State Prosecutor brought on those grounds against an individual who, in July 2023, during a funeral and commemoration in Srebrenica, openly engaged in activities that constitute hate speech and genocide denial related to the genocide verdicts of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The suggestion by Serbia that we should aim for an agreement at the regional level on Srebrenica is also something that we cannot understand, given that in the declaration adopted in 2010 in the Parliament of Serbia,

"[the] National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia strongly condemns the crime committed against the Bosniak population in Srebrenica in July 1995 in the manner determined by the judgment of the International Court of Justice".

The genocide committed in Srebrenica is not a matter of opinion, but a historical and judicial fact confirmed by the judgments of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The final judgments of the highest judicial institutions of the United Nations have confirmed that genocide was committed against the Bosniaks in the United Nations safe area of Srebrenica. Those are judicial rulings that cannot be erased from the history of humankind or be debated internally, regionally or globally. Those judgments are the unique and specific rationale for establishing the international day and focusing the draft resolution solely on Srebrenica and what transpired in 1995. The continued narrative that diminishes and underrates the genocide in Srebrenica enables the very destructive force aimed at our country and our people. It incites inter-ethnic tensions that undermine all genuine attempts at reconciliation in the country and the region. It is the precise reason why the Balkans continue to be a volatile region and why Bosnia and Herzegovina could not overcome the consequences of the conflict in the 1990s.

Yet again, I wish to denounce the narrative that the draft resolution is not only a controversial issue that should be subject to discussion and negotiations in my country and the region, but also one that threatens peace and stability at both levels. Contrary to the narrative that is being promoted in opposition to the draft resolution, allow me to emphasize its fundamental goal: to build sustainable peace and encourage the process of justice, truth and building trust in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans region. And here, I most profoundly agree with our neighbour, the Republic of Serbia, by saying that we need discussion on the issue. Yes, we are more than open to discussions. We just need to discuss how to implement the judgments of the ICTY and the International Court of Justice, how to come to terms the past and how to build a better future together. Institutional protection of the legacy and jurisprudence of the ICTY and the International Court of Justice simultaneously protects civilizational values and the fundamental principles on which we, the United Nations, rest, and stands as a warning that impunity for that grave crime will not be allowed.

The process of reconciliation must include the overall recovery of society and the confrontation of the past, not only through the recognition of genocide and crimes, the recognition of victims and the punishment of criminals, but also by focusing on an outcome that will promote peace and justice. We would, therefore, welcome a constructive approach by Serbia towards that goal. However, for 30 years, we have been confronted with denial that acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes were committed during the armed conflict, with individuals and public authorities openly questioning the legitimacy of judgments issued by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the courts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with individuals and public authorities honouring or glorifying convicted war criminals.

Instead of recognizing it as one of the vilest chapters in Europe's contemporary history and working towards reconciliation, many prominent politicians and public figures in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Serbia are fanning the flames of nationalism and wilfully sowing the seeds of hate. Many have failed to understand the historic lessons of Nuremberg and completely miss the point of the ICTY and its work.

I especially want to underline that the draft resolution concerning the genocide in Srebrenica is not a threat to the Serbian people but rather to some named

individuals, in particular regarding the eight judgments of the ICTY that contain guilty verdicts for the crime of genocide committed in Srebrenica in 1995. There are no genocidal nations. There are only criminals who are responsible for genocide.

Denial is the final stage of genocide, which lasts throughout and always remains after genocide. It is a form of desecration of the dead, a violation of one of the most basic human norms. It brutalizes us and facilitates the repetition of atrocity. Is that the kind of society we wish to leave to our children, one in which genocide denial can only lead to its repetition?

I say to everyone in this Chamber — by denying the genocide in and around Srebrenica and by glorifying legally convicted war criminals, the surviving witnesses of the genocide are exposed to attacks on their dignity every day. It dehumanizes the survivors and the victims and strips them of both recognition and justice. It hampers the fight against impunity for war crimes and, eventually, the possibility of reconciliation. The culture of remembering the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica is not and must not be a culture of denial, but a culture of memory so that the genocide is never again repeated.

Continuously diminishing and understating the genocide in Srebrenica empowers the highly destructive forces aimed against my country and our people. It undermines all genuine attempts at reconciliation in the country and the region. It is the precise reason why the Balkans continue to be a volatile region, as some say, and why Bosnia and Herzegovina has not been able to overcome the consequences of the conflict in the 1990s. That is what stands in the way of reconciliation and peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Genocide denial, in fact, sows discord and mistrust among peoples and thus increases the chances of conflicts in society and among countries, and if it continues unabated, genocide denial will continue to create fertile soil for future genocides. Protecting the truth from deniers and serving justice for the victims of the Srebrenica genocide is the best bet to prevent genocides from occurring again.

The United Nations has acknowledged the mistakes it made regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted the guilt of the international community by saying that Srebrenica represents the greatest disgrace in the history of the United Nations. Mistakes committed can no longer be corrected, but we have an obligation to

stop new ones, together. If the United Nations made those mistakes in 1995, then we should not make them again in 2024. Never again.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Đurić (Serbia): It is my distinct honour to address the Council on behalf of the Republic of Serbia.

I address the Council today as my country stands ready to protect the Dayton Peace Agreement and stands ready to protect peace and stability in the Balkans region, but also stands ready to protect the memory and the dignity of more than 100,000 victims of the bloody civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All of those victims, regardless of their nationality, race or religion, deserve equal justice, deserve equal treatment and deserve equal remembrance and respect before the international community.

My country has continuously and persistently supported the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the integrity and the competencies of both Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the same time, I want to speak out in defence of future generations, who deserve so much better than being forced to man ideological or real trenches, dug out for them by the failures of previous generations, and who also deserve so much better than living in a system in which hatred and intolerance are being perpetuated ad nauseam and forcefully instilled in them. In the light of all of the bitterness that has filled this Chamber again, I feel compelled to bow my head, equally and unequivocally, on behalf of the country I represent, to all of the victims of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of their ethnicity, race or religion.

Having done so, I want to ask all those who proposed the untimely and uncoordinated General Assembly draft resolution on Srebrenica (A/78/L.67) to reflect deeply once again on their divisive initiative. The very fact that that draft resolution, launched without consensus within Bosnia and Herzegovina, as we have heard from Her Excellency Ms. Željka Cvijanović, in clear and blatant violation of its constitutional order, and has, instead of reconciliation, caused the convening of an emergency Security Council meeting, should be sufficient for its initiators to withdraw the proposed text and go back to the drawing board.

When assessing the extent of the possible threat posed by the opening of unhealed wounds in this manner, let us recall that 35 years ago, one of the main triggers for the bloody break-up of the former Yugoslavia was the fact that irresponsible political leaders on all three sides, mere months before the first victims fell, started digging out the bodies of the victims of the Second World War which, at that time, had happened 50 years before. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended 29 years ago, but the degree of ethnic tensions already ignited within Bosnia and Herzegovina because of the draft resolution, and owing to the lack of both a transparent and inclusive drafting process and balanced and mutually acceptable content, is wreaking havoc in the country and among peoples who have suffered so much. All of that is in addition to the division it has created within the international community, on a matter that should be both uniting and universally upheld.

What, then, has caused such a negative reaction? Let me be very clear and very concrete. The draft resolution on Srebrenica was drafted, proposed and sponsored by the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, without the legally required consent of the tripartite Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the contrary, it was done in almost complete secrecy, without consulting the Serbian entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina or its elected representatives, and without any attempt to acknowledge the more than 100,000 other victims of the war that brought down the former Yugoslavia.

The draft resolution was drafted without any regional consultations, despite the requirements of basic respect among nations, as well as established good practice, unlike the case of the General Assembly resolution on the Rwanda genocide in 2003 (General Assembly resolution 58/234). Furthermore, Article 12 of the Charter of the United Nations clearly stipulates that matters being discussed by the Council should not be decided by the General Assembly, making the proposed resolution a direct encroachment on the competencies of the Council. The draft resolution is narrow in scope and does not do justice to the vast majority of the war's victims.

Let me also be very clear — the Republic of Serbia has continuously and consistently condemned all crimes of that tragic conflict, and particularly the Srebrenica massacre, which was horrific and stands out in terms of its scale and cruelty. In 2010, the National Assembly of

the Republic of Serbia adopted a declaration condemning the crime in Srebrenica. Senior officials of the Republic of Serbia, including two subsequent presidents, paid their respects to the victims at the memorial centre in Potočari on several occasions and participated in commemorations at the United Nations in New York. The Republic of Serbia unequivocally and strongly condemns the denial of all the crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, I would like to ask here a simple question to those who initiated this draft resolution, which does not acknowledge so many of the victims of horrific crimes that should be shameful for every human being. What are you going to tell those here present in this room — sisters Duška and Svetlana Stanić from Duvno, who were only six and eight years old when they were tortured and abused in the Raščani prison camp for the crime of being born as Serbs, or Rajko Draganić, who came back home to Brđani, in the Konjic municipality with his daughter, only to find his wife and his parents slaughtered? What are you going to say to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as Dušan Magazin from Živašnica, who is here today, and whose parents' throats were slit while he was still young? Are these victims less worthy of remembrance?

For the families of many victims, it is still difficult for their voices to be heard and recognized. For 29 long years they have been begging for the truth and for justice, and we wanted to give these people an opportunity to share their testimonies at today's event entitled "Advocating equal justice for all Bosnia and Herzegovina war victims — the only path to reconciliation". They best understand the pain of all the victims and their families, regardless of whether they are Bosniaks, Croats or fellow Serbs. I reiterate that we need to bear in mind that equal justice for all Bosnia and Herzegovina war victims is the only path to lasting peace, stability and reconciliation.

Contrary to everything we are being told by some of the co-sponsors, the real reason for proposing this divisive and dangerous draft resolution has been revealed by Mr. Elmedin Konaković, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who days ago publicly said "Such a Serbia deserves nothing other than to be despised, and does not deserve a hand of cooperation". He went on to proclaim in an offensive way that his ethno-nationalist regime intends to reopen judicial proceedings against my country and does not have reconciliation or good neighbourly relations on its agenda.

As we gather today to discuss these difficult issues, we must acknowledge the challenges of our past, yet choose a constructive path forward. Our region should be united not by the grievances of times past, but by our common goals for prosperity. It is imperative that we focus on nurturing talent and capturing new markets together. Just look at the staggering number of individuals leaving both entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially from the Federation. This exodus raises a critical question: who will remain, if we persist in dredging up old wounds? Do you really think that so many of the war victims, if they could speak, would consent to being trivially exploited for political purposes? Personally, I believe they would not desire our region to be shackled by a cycle of inter-ethnic hatred under the guise of remembering the past. Would they be content to see their homelands stuck in bitterness, or would they prefer we honour their memory by building a peaceful future?

That brings me to a poignant conversation I had yesterday with a foreign dignitary, one of the Permanent Representatives here at the United Nations. He expressed astonishment at our fixation on past conflicts and rightly pointed out that healing is impossible if we continually reopen old wounds. He advised us to let the past rest and focus on the present and future. Therefore, I urge the Council to consider not just where we have been, but where we are headed. We must avoid the pitfalls that previous generations fell into. Let us not sow seeds of discord that could sprout in future generations. The war in the former Yugoslavia began by exploiting long-standing grievances. This must not be our legacy. It is time to put aside draft resolutions that serve only to divide. Instead of digging up old graves and trenches, let us draft a new General Assembly resolution that will have a consensus within Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region, one that would lead us to the future, reconciliation, collaboration and friendship, development and prosperity, as our region holds the highest development potential in Europe.

In conclusion, let us right away withdraw the divisive proposal of the draft resolution on Srebrenica and commit to a path of mutual respect and equal treatment for all victims. There must be no more hierarchy of victims, and no more revenge through political discourse. We owe it to our people and our children to forge a path of reconciliation and shared progress. To quote Archbishop Desmond Tutu,

“There is no shortcut or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence. Creating trust and understanding between former enemies is a supremely difficult challenge.”

Let us work together on overcoming this challenge. Let us give justice to everyone, let us give time to heal the wounds, let us reach a consensus on how to move beyond the divisions and ensure that the painful past of our region does not and cannot happen ever again.

The President: We are very much over time. I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Ćurić Hrvatinić (Croatia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Bosnia and Herzegovina on its recent great achievement, that is, the opening of the accession negotiations for membership in the European Union (EU) in March. Croatia has wholeheartedly supported this decision politically, diplomatically and by providing technical assistance, and will continue to support Bosnia and Herzegovina on its European path. The progress in the EU integration process clearly demonstrates how far the country can advance, once there is sufficient political will and cooperation. We would particularly like to commend the work of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, led by Chair Borjana Krišto, which has had a crucial role in this process.

This progress has proved that the existing constitutional and political framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina is sufficient to move the country forward if dialogue prevails, cooperation replaces divisions and compromise is not considered a failure, but a joint success. Political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina have demonstrated the capacity to move the country forward, once there is genuine political dialogue and cooperation, in particular between the political representatives of the three constituent peoples. We should support and encourage such progress. The international community still has a significant and positive role in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, it is up to the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their legitimate political leaders to take up the responsibility for the future of the country and its well-being.

We would like to encourage all in Bosnia and Herzegovina to focus on the European integration and further relevant reforms. This includes the electoral reform, which should establish genuine equality

among constituent peoples — Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs — and guarantee the fundamental rights of each citizen as a cornerstone of political stability. This is key to live up to the aspirations of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, move the country forward on its EU integration path, and ensure a better future for all.

The President: Ms. Cvijanović has requested the floor again. We are over time, I can only allocate two minutes to her. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Cvijanović: My understanding is that both Mr. Schmidt and myself are here in a private or personal capacity, and it is not strange, given the fact that Mister Schmidt has not been recognized as a as High Representative by many, since he failed to actually fulfil the requirements of annex 4 of the Dayton Agreement. That is my first point.

My second point is that I represent only myself here, and not the Presidency as a whole, and it is going to be the same case when my colleague actually joins the Council in 14 or 15 days' time, when the Council holds its regular meeting on the debate on Bosnia Herzegovina, because he will also represent only his views, not the views of the Presidency as a whole, because in order to present the stance of the Presidency, one needs to have prior consultations and a sort of reconciliation of attitudes and things like that. So just to be clear, there is no need to emphasize that, because we are fully aware of that.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Lagumdžija for reading my letters. It is very good to know that he reads my letters, although he does not forward them to where they are addressed, unlike what he does when it comes to my colleagues, such as Mr. Bećirović, because he regularly sends his letters, so his letters are actually read by members' missions.

It also very good that Ambassador Lagumdžija mentioned the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, because that is part of defence. Concerning defence, I have to emphasize that the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency is in charge of defence. It is our responsibility, and an issue on which we decide by consensus. It is very strange that, knowing that we need to decide by consensus, no one reacted to all the things that I mentioned here. Namely, I quoted what the Minister of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zukan Helez, has said and also what the Minister of Interior of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ramo Isak, said when he openly threatened violence

and war. They spoke about using wars involving tanks to fight Republika Srpska. They mentioned their ideas: that they are going to establish special camps, and that they are going to introduce a reserve force, weapons training and things such as that in in our schools. All of those things cannot happen without prior consultation and the prior approval of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency. That is something I must emphasize. I am very sorry to note that Mr. Schmidt, for instance, did not comment on this.

I am also very sad to hear that the people here, who are representatives of Governments, only mentioned Republika Srpska and Milorad Dodik. For instance, I was listening carefully to —

The President: I would ask Ms. Cvijanović to wrap up, as it has been more than two minutes.

Ms. Cvijanović: When French President Macron refers to jihadists in Bosnia and Herzegovina and calls the country a ticking time bomb, I think that that deserves more attention than something that was stated by officials or representatives of Republika Srpska here, and that is not something that people like to hear. But we are speaking about reality, about the need not to breach the Constitution, because it is our obligation not to breach the Constitution.

There are many other things I would like to mention, but I understand that time is short and I only have two minutes. But I also need to say at the end that I am now even more convinced that Mr. Schmidt —

The President: I am sorry, but I am going to have to give the floor to someone else, because we are very

much over time. The meeting time is only till 6 p.m., and we are more than half an hour over.

The representative of the United States has asked for floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor. I just need to correct the record here. Ms. Cvijanović mentioned that Mr. Schmidt is here in his personal capacity. On the contrary, he is here in his professional capacity as High Representative, as noted by the Secretariat on the list of speakers.

The President: There are no more names inscribed in the list of speakers.

Before adjourning the meeting, as this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of April, I would like to express, on behalf of the delegation of Malta, our sincere appreciation to the members of the Council and to the secretariat of the Council for all the support they have given us. Indeed it has been a busy month, and one in which we rallied to consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone and without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, including the technical support team, conference service officers, interpreters, verbatim reporters and security staff.

As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of Mozambique the best of luck for the month of May.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.