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Commissioner Füle and Secretary General Jagland regret the lack of progress in implementing the Sejdić-Finci judgment

Strasbourg, 08.04.2013 - Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle and Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland deeply regret the lack of progress in reaching an agreement on the implementation of the European Court for Human Rights judgment in the Sejdić-Finci case in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In a joint letter of 4 February, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Füle expressed their expectation that a political agreement on the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci ruling could be reached by the end of March 2013, in line with the conclusions of the Second Meeting of the EU – Bosnia and Herzegovina High Level Dialogue on the Accession Process. In the last two months Head of EU Delegation / EUSR Sørensen and his team have held numerous meetings with the relevant authorities, political parties, civil society representatives and other interested stakeholders. In addition the leaders of the main political parties met in Brussels on 22 March, at the invitation of Director General for Enlargement Stefano Sannino and in the presence of representatives of the Council of Europe and the European External Action Service. With the EU's help, several possibilities to implement the Sejdić-Finci judgment, taking into account the political parties' proposals and concerns, have been thoroughly explored.

Commissioner Füle and Secretary General Jagland regret that narrow party and ethnic interests continue to prevail over genuine engagement to end the constitutional discrimination of many citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and bring the legislation in line with the European Convention on Human Rights.

The regrettable lack of commitment from some of the party leaders to the EU agenda will clearly undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina's European integration process. Time is running out for the Constitution and Election Law to be brought in compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights in view of the 2014 elections. This is contrary to the interest of the citizens of the country. The lack of willingness to compromise and to address the Sejdić-Finci ruling shows that the declared commitment to the EU agenda is not backed up by concrete deeds and action.

In this context, Commissioner Füle has decided to cancel the Third Meeting of the High Level Dialogue which was scheduled to take place in Mostar on 11 April.

Commissioner Füle intends to visit Sarajevo on 11 April instead, together with Council of Europe and Venice Commission technical experts, for a series of consultations aiming at how best to address the Sejdić-Finci ruling.

Commissioner Füle recalls that the Council conclusions state that Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a matter of priority, needs to bring its Constitution into compliance with the European Convention of Human Rights in line with the Sejdić-Finci ruling. A credible effort in this regard remains necessary for the entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. Completing the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci ruling and having a satisfactory track record in implementing its obligations under the SAA/Interim Agreement would be key elements for a credible membership application to be considered by the EU. Until these conditions are fulfilled it will not be possible to consider further steps for Bosnia and Herzegovina on its EU path.

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