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## R E M A R K S

### **by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the end of the visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina**

*"I felt it was very important to come to Bosnia and Herzegovina today, to speak to the institutional leaders, and members of civil society, face to face. This reflects the fact that European Union integration requires the support of the whole of society, and it must be a priority for everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

*Let me repeat what I hope you already know: the European Union is fully committed to you and to your European perspective. We want to see a united, stable, prosperous, multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina taking its rightful place in the European Union.*

*And we are determined to stand with the citizens of this country, and to help them achieve their aspirations.*

*The people have been very clear in expressing their ambitions and their concerns. They want employment opportunities and a growing economy, they want a social welfare system that works, they want the rule of law, and an efficient justice system.*

*Those who hold the key to these ambitions are the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. So to fulfil these justified expectations, leaders need to look beyond ethnic divisions, and look after interests of all the people of this wonderful country.*

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*I strongly believe that the leaders need to focus on:*

- *Reforming the economy, the social welfare system and promoting trade;*
- *Strengthening the rule of law;*
- *Protecting human rights.*

*The legitimate concerns of citizens arising from social and economic grievances were very clearly heard in the capitals of the European Union. They need to be heard and understood here as well. We agree that violence is not acceptable, but we know that urgent action is needed.*

*Because right now Bosnia and Herzegovina is falling very seriously behind on this agenda, while its neighbours are moving forward. And the crucial element here is the political will of the leaders.*

*So I call on the political leaders to listen, take responsibility and act. And to do this now.*

*I guarantee you that the European Union will add its support to any efforts the political leadership take that bring real benefits to the people.*

*You know that significant efforts to help the country have been made by the European Union over the past years.*

*And the European Union is looking at how we can do even more to help. In the coming days and weeks I will be having many discussions about Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Member States of the European Union.*

*But I want to make two things very clear:*

*First, this is not about lowering the bar, it is about helping you get over it. So in that context we are ready to consider broader engagement to help address these issues.*

*And secondly, the first and biggest responsibility lies with the political leaders of the country.*

*On every occasion when I have had the privilege of visiting this beautiful country I say the same thing. We want to see Bosnia and Herzegovina succeed. But as anywhere in the world, success begins at home.*

*Thank you!"*