

**15th Interparliamentary Meeting,
8-9 July 2013, Brussels**

**JOINT STATEMENT
by the Co-chairpersons, applauded by all Members**

At the conclusion of the 15th European Parliament – Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina Interparliamentary Meeting, held in Brussels on 8 and 9 July 2013, the two delegations:

1. Strongly reiterated their support for the European integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) for the benefit of all citizens of the country;
2. Took the view that the rights of public assembly and of expression of political opinions are basic fundamental and political rights and that exercising these rights must not undermine the fundamental and political rights of others, such as the freedom of movement or the right to work or conduct political activities; invited the BiH politicians to consider, where appropriate, citizens' demands and to demonstrate their willingness to secure prosperity for the citizens;
3. Noted the need to strengthen efficiency and to improve quality of coordination and cooperation amongst institutions at all levels of government in BiH, especially in the context of successful implementation of obligations under the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA);
4. Stated the need to reach an agreement with regard to the implementation of the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of “Sejdić/Finci vs. BiH,” to ensure the SAA with BiH would enter into force and the country could submit a credible application for membership;
5. Encouraged all BiH citizens, in particular the politicians, religious leaders and artists, to foster a culture and climate of reconciliation in BiH and in the region; called upon BiH citizens to recognise war crimes and atrocities committed by their own ethnic groups and to seek mutual understanding and forgiveness;
6. Called on all political parties to work proactively for an inclusive and tolerant society, to publicly condemn hate crimes and to ensure proper investigation and judicial prosecution; invited the authorities to actively support civil society initiatives in this field, including with financial assistance and political commitment;
7. Underlined the importance of conducting a census of the population in October 2013, and welcomed the efforts to ensure that it takes place as scheduled and in compliance with international standards; urged all competent authorities to create a favourable social and institutional environment and avoid politicising a census whose purpose is to provide objective socio-economic data;
8. Reminded BiH authorities to adopt a strategic approach to the rural and agricultural development sector and to create the conditions enabling BiH farmers to compete with EU farmers; therefore, called on the parliaments of the Republika Srpska and of the Federation to harmonise their programmes on agriculture and rural development in line with the BiH strategic plan for agriculture, which has not been implemented yet; expressed concerns that preparations for the IPARD funds are insufficient and that no agricultural information strategy exists in BiH;
9. Expressed their concern over the high level of corruption present in the country and its link to political parties; invited the responsible authorities to show political will in tackling the issue and to provide means for the Anti-Corruption Agency to become fully operational and to build up a track record of investigations and convictions;
10. Urged the competent BiH authorities to adapt their legal system in line with the current situation of Croatia's EU membership and to avoid losing further on export markets;
11. Reiterated the call to permit the entry of Kosovo citizens into BiH, as BiH is the only country in the region that does not admit them; urged the BiH authorities, therefore, to accept the basic travel documents of Kosovo citizens and to enable them to enter the country, as is done by Serbia and other countries;
12. Called for the full implementation of the Mine Action Strategy as well as the adoption of the law on anti-mine actions, in order to prevent further casualties from landmine accidents;
13. Urged governments at all levels to sustain sound fiscal policies; expressed their concern about the high level of unemployment, particularly in relation to women and young people; stressed the effects of political instability and a weak rule of law on growth and investment, as well as on the business environment as a whole;
14. Stressed the need to improve the overall quality of education in order to meet the needs of the internal and foreign labour market; called on the BiH authorities to address the deficiencies of vocational training in order to attract foreign direct investment.