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Sponsor of the conference

## **INTRODUCTORY SPEECH**

### **EUROPEAN UNION – CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES**

The main strategic goal and priority of Bosnia and Herzegovina, when it comes to foreign policy, is the full membership in the European Union. That is the objective on which there is full consensus in Bosnia and Herzegovina in political, academic and social public. That consensus is formalized also as one of priorities of foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the sense of firm commitment for inclusion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in contemporary European, political, economic and security integrations. The submission of application for Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership in the European Union on 15 February 2016, that is transferred then to the Council of the European Union and the European Council for consideration, was a kind of breach for Bosnia and Herzegovina in the process of European integration. After this date it was approached to the European issues on more serious and intensive way what is after long time suggested improvement of quality of social, political and economic life in BiH.

For many other countries issue of the membership in the European Union is a matter of one-off political decision to whose realization is further devoted to their institutions. However, for Bosnia and Herzegovina membership in the European Union is at the same time matter of its survival and future, and hence of perspective of all its citizens or all three constitutive – fundamental peoples. In the first place, the European Bosnia and Herzegovina implies overcome of many communicational and political barriers that it is necessary to face with on daily basis. Indeed, most other countries do not have internal problems that Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing with, what

gives them more space to direct themselves operationally on implementation of their access obligations and dialogue with the European institutions. In Bosnia and Herzegovina situation is much more complex and therefore every step towards the EU has a specific value.

Being part of family of prosperous, safe and well-regulated European Union countries requires for adjustment of each segment of society and life, and adjustment with the European Union system at all fields. It is a significant path, but for Bosnia and Herzegovina that path does not have an alternative. The state is a complex system and all its segments has to function as one body. That kind of harmonization and coordination can be achieved exclusively by activating and intensifying systematic and comprehensive process that European integrations are. The credibility of application for membership, based on which the Questionnaire was delivered to BiH and whose filling is currently devoted to relevant institutions, bodies and services at all levels, is a huge step forward and opportunity for everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The perspective of EU membership, as the biggest pacifist project in the history of humanity, is an impulse and driving force of many processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina that should strengthen the country for activities in accordance with EU regulations. Adjustment of knowledge and skill is necessary for achievement of society competitiveness. Investing in science, innovation and research is the best way to make a positive step forward on this path. All activities set out in the Master plan of accession process to the EU are necessary to build a functional economic system and to improve the rule of law. Implementation of necessary reforms ultimately has to result in stronger economic activity and market strengthening. Through this processes Bosnia and Herzegovina will become more part of EU economic market no matter how this vision seems unimaginable looking from the current perspective and disparities of economic conditions and powers in comparison to EU countries. However, this is a strategic process and all what we will do on our further path towards EU should be part of it.

Values that have united Europeans over decades and preserved the project of European peace and communion are no doubt the values on which we can build better Bosnia and Herzegovina for all its peoples and actively contribute to stabilisation of opportunities in the region of the Southeast Europe. It is clear that path towards EU is not without challenges. Therefore, i believe that we have to show greater and stronger commitment in the way the European leaders have succeeded in the history using unique strength diversity of their people as advantage. It is time to be open and courage. A reversal and positive outcome are possible only if we show mutual understanding and unity, but first of all, to show sincerity regarding our commitment to the european perspective of BiH and devote to sincere attention to the european values in the political life of our homeland, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The European path represents unique strategic choice and way to strengthen state-building processes, to build and strengthen legal, economic, social and any other kind of security. That is the path Europe has chosen and the crown of that choice is over seventy years of peace, cooperation, unity and prosperity. That is the path Bosnia and Herzegovina has also finally chosen and that must be presevered because the struggle for the European future of BiH is at the same time struggle for its survival.

Therefore, by the end of 2017 it is necessary to maintain integration proces in the focus of the whole public in BiH to achieve the next big goal that is a status of candidate country for EU membership. Till then it can be expected that results of all reforms will become more visible and ultimately create better living conditions in BiH but also higher level of institutional security for all three peoples. There is no reason for Bosnia and Herzegovina to stay behind its neighbours. With the right approach, committment and initiative BiH is on a good path to become desirable community where all three peoples can achieve its equal status and their members its individual ambitions.

Understandably, this necessary implies improvement of institutional position of the Croatian people, primarily through the changes of the

Election Law and then through its clear positioning within the BiH administrative and political system in order to continue to work in a full capacity to realize the vision of the European Bosnia and Herzegovina as community of equal peoples and all its other inhabitants who do not feel so.

Everything suggests that 2017 is the key year in the context of overall efforts to create European BiH as functional, sovereign state of equal peoples and citizens organized at federal principles that can give its full contribution to the EU as area of peace, security, stability and prosperity.