

Speaker: Mr Glenn Payot

Thank you Mr. President,

The political marginalisation of non-constituent citizens entrenched in the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina leaves minority groups with limited decision-making power in the government. National minorities and *de facto* minority communities including minority returnees – Serbs living in the Federation of BiH and Bosniaks and Croats living in the Republika Srpska – are excluded from representation in the tripartite Presidency and the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly. Moreover, local laws and constitutions extend similar special privileges to the Constituent Peoples in the government and public institutions at national, entity and cantonal levels. Therefore, we urge BiH to accept recommendations related to amending its Constitution and national laws in order to end ethnic discrimination in political participation against both national minorities and *de facto* minority communities, to ensure full political participation of all citizens at all levels of governance regardless of their national and ethnic origin, and to take immediate steps to implement the European Court of Human Rights judgments in both the *Sejdić and Finci* and *Zornić case*.

We would like to stress the importance of effective participation of minority groups in the consultation process aiming to carry out the necessary legal reforms needed to ensure equal political participation for ethnic minorities. The lack of meaningful minority participation is not only a further manifestation of the problem of discrimination and exclusion from access to political decision-making addressed in the *Sejdić and Finci* judgment but also contrary to international and regional standards of minority rights protection, including Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 2 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and Article 15 of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Therefore, we encourage BiH when carrying out the implementation of the relevant recommendations to ensure that minority groups in BiH have the opportunity to effectively participate in the consultation process.

I thank you.