



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on the Western Balkans

*2933rd EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting
Brussels, 16 March 2009*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The Council reiterated its full support to the European perspective of Bosnia and Herzegovina and called upon the local political leaders to engage thoroughly and with stronger determination on the necessary reform agenda in order for the country to make substantial progress on its way towards the European Union. The Council encouraged Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue fully implementing the Interim Agreement. Remaining deeply concerned about the overall political situation in BiH, the Council called upon BiH's political leaders to refrain from nationalist rhetoric and unilateral actions.

The Council reconfirmed its readiness for a transition from the Office of High Representative to increased local ownership, supported by a reinforced European Union presence, as soon as the conditions are met. The Council acknowledged the progress of the EU preparations, presented by the SG/HR and the Enlargement Commissioner, for its strengthened engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina under a reinforced, double-hatted EUSR/Head of the Commission Delegation.

P R E S S

Recalling its conclusions of 10 November 2008, the Council urged Bosnia and Herzegovina to maximize its efforts to complete fulfillment of the five objectives and two conditions set by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board. To this aim, the Council strongly encouraged continuation of the Prud/Odzak process, urging that the widest possible consensus be found and called for the commitments undertaken in this context to be rapidly translated into further progress and concrete legislative results.

The Council appointed Ambassador Valentin Inzko as EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and welcomed his appointment as High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Council commended the former EU Special Representative and High Representative Miroslav Lajčák for his outstanding efforts and commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina and its European future.

The Council noted that, despite the challenging political environment, the security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained stable. The Council welcomed the progress on the preparatory work for a possible evolution of Operation ALTHEA. The Council agreed to keep this work under regular review so that a decision on the future of the operation could be taken once the necessary conditions had been met. In this context, the Council reiterated that the possible evolution of operation ALTHEA would need to take political developments into account. The Council noted that cooperation with NATO on operation ALTHEA was continuing to work smoothly."
