



Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to take this opportunity to brief my distinguished colleagues on the latest developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina as regards the issue of irregular migrations.

This last Monday, 28 November, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Minister of Security, Mr Selmo Cikotić, and the Head of the IOM Country Office, Ms. Laura Lungarotti.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Mr. Olivér Várhelyi, the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement.

The European Union has provided a regional assistance package of 40 million Euros in order to strengthen border protection capacities.

Under this package, Bosnia and Herzegovina will receive 6.4 million Euros of support in this year alone.

Responding to the request of the competent authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU is delivering equipment for border protection and surveillance, such as drones, thermal cameras, video surveillance systems, monitoring vehicles and communication networks.

During the signing ceremony, Commissioner Várhelyi also announced a new pilot project worth 500.000 Euros with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the IOM to support voluntary and forced returns.

This project aims at strengthening the capacity for returns of migrants who do not qualify for international protection and must therefore be returned directly from the region to their countries of origin.

We welcome the continued support provided by the European Union.

We also very much appreciate the commitment of the IOM to support the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to efficiently manage the irregular migrations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is at the forefront among the Western Balkan countries when it comes to the efficient overall management of the returns of persons who do not meet the requirements for regular, legal stay in the country, or who abuse the asylum procedures and submit fake asylum claims.

Since 2018, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the assistance of the IOM, have repatriated to their countries of origin a total of 1,300 irregular migrants.

This recently signed Memorandum of Understanding also provides for an intensified dialogue with the authorities of the countries of origin with the aim of helping repatriated persons integrate more easily and more successfully their societies.

With the help of our partners, the EU, the IOM and the UNHCR, and in close cooperation with the neighbouring countries, we will continue to provide meaningful, sustained contribution to the security and stability in the Western Balkans and Europe at large.

Thank you.