February 15, 2016

*Open letter by a group of citizens aware of their responsibilities for their own future and concerned for the future of BiH to:*

Citizens of BiH

Council of ministers of BiH

EU, EU delegation in BiH

Today’s application for EU membership by leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina reaffirms the commitment of BiH to join the European family and respect European values and rules. This step however should not be understood as a great step forward on a European path and BiH leaders should not be allowed to use this event to promote their own re-election. Quite the contrary. BiH leaders have so far failed to fully meet even a single condition set by the EU for an application by BiH to be considered credible. For this reason the very act of application has become, or has remained, a mere formality.

BiH leaders have failed even more to meet the promises given to BiH citizens during the 2014 elections when they obligated themselves to work towards stabilizing the political, economic and social conditions in the country. Instead, they have been increasingly engaging in political quarrels that have nothing to do with protecting the ethnic or political interests of BiH, its ethnic groups or citizens, but are rather motivated by conflicting personal interests and mutual animosities among the people in power.

The growing politicization and monopolization of executive, legislative and judicial institutions is threatening to push the country and its peoples, without any real reason and need, into even greater economic and social misery, into political chaos, and maybe into something even worse. Quarrels among politicians are increasingly resulting in polarization among Bosnia’s local communities where ethnic tensions seem to be even greater than 20 years ago, jeopardizing the future of this country.

A majority of citizens of BiH believe that they want to be a part of the European family, but many do not know what European integration really means, which changes it requires and which consequences it may have. Many BiH citizens claim that they want to enter into Europe but they still do not recognize BiH as it is today, nor do they accept European norms and values.

On its behalf the EU has created a vision of a relatively stable and prosperous Balkans whish was supposed to be a part of its tactic in the region. In the meantime, this illusion has been accepted as reality and is now being used by the same EU as an excuse for maintaining its weak and shallow engagement in BiH and the rest of the Balkans. Such an EU engagement is jeopardizing the stability of the Balkans and therefore the stability of Europe itself.

***Conscious of this situation as well as our own responsibility and commitment to truly contribute to positive changes in BiH and Europe we call for;***

**Political leaders in BiH** to first and foremost fulfil the remaining conditions so that the EU application would be considered credible. The first priority should be resolving the confusion regarding the coordinating mechanism because that mechanism and its inclusive and transparent implementation is of crucial importance not only for the EU accession process but also for all internal processes in BiH in the next 15-20 years. BiH politicians should finally stop playing increasingly dangerous political games and seriously focus on reform processes with full inclusion of all segments of BiH society.

**The European Union** should recognize the recent developments in BiH as a serious warning, and acknowledge that this kind of application is not as an essential step forward by BiH, but as another local leaders' ploy which underlinesthe need for a much more concrete and serious EU engagement in BiH and the rest of the Balkans. EU should as soon as possible start preparing a new and serious strategy towards BiH and the rest of the Balkans and the accession process can only be a part of it, but not the strategy itself. We also expect from the EU to clearly communicate to local politicians that eventual success on the EU path will require from them to change their management of human resources in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so that instead of suitable and obedient, start appointing responsible and capable professionals to key positions.

**The citizens of BiH** should wake up from lethargy, stop hoping and expecting that someone else – be it local, regional, European, American, Russian, Turkish or some other leaders – will provide and guarantee the security and prosperity for which they themselves are not ready to work. It is exactly this general lack of interest, passivity and indifference in society, which gives BiH leaders the mandate to do whatever they want and use resources and institutions for personal benefit. If BiH citizens want to secure better living conditions for themselves and their offspring they should engage actively and remain engaged in creating a better environment. Those who want changes should stop dreaming about some better times long gone or wishing for some ideal systems, accept this reality and then start changing and improving it. We can only change ourselves, but by changing our behaviour we change the world we live in.

To those BiH politicians, citizens and EU officials who are not sure what kind of changes are required, we propose to start with one of the basic principles of coexistence that was always present in our tradition: **do not do unto others, what you do not want others to do unto you.**