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PRESS RELEASE

Upon the initiative of the Presiding Judge of the Constitutional Court of Montenegro Desanka Lopičić and the President of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina Zlatko Knežević, in the organisation of AIRE Centre, a meeting of the Presidents of the Constitutional Courts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of Croatia, Republic of North Macedonia and Republic of Slovenia was held on Thursday, 7 May, via online platform.

The discussion at the meeting has revolved around the challenges and experiences that these institutions have encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic, the method of organising the work at the constitutional courts of each of the countries, having in the end agreed on the further steps in cooperation. The next meeting has been scheduled for June, while, in the meantime, the cooperation is set to take place also among legal advisors and registrars of these courts.

Regarding the meeting, **Desanka Lopičić**, the Presiding Judge of the Constitutional Court of Montenegro, stated the following: “A dialogue among constitutional courts is particularly important in the period of crisis, which poses authentic and fundamental questions and requires such answers with a view to strengthening the protection of individual rights and the rule of law. The Constitutional Court of Montenegro acknowledges this dialogue as a joint impulse to the regional, as well as to the broader European constitutional cooperation.”

Zlatko Knežević, the President of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, stated the following: “This crisis is unique in so far as the judicial institutions in all 47 countries of the Council of Europe are facing challenges, and the mechanism for continuous exchange of the case law and opinions among the colleagues from the region will be of valuable help. The measures of the State, including the interference with the civil rights, are changing on a daily basis, and the constitutional courts face an important task to provide, by means

of their decisions, the protection of rights as well as to establish the standards, which may prove to be of significance if we happen to encounter a new wave of the virus pandemic.”

Biljana Braithwaite, Program Manager for the Western Balkans, stated the following: “It is our great honour to be able to support this initiative. The measures undertaken by the governments in the fight against COVID-19 with a view to suppressing the epidemic inevitably affect the rights of individuals in our countries at this time, and may affect the standards of the human rights protection in the foreseeable future. This initiative is a part of our broader engagement supported by the British Government with a view to strengthening the national implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights’ and the rule of law in the region.”