Security and Defence Policy

Mandated through the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) decisions of May 2000, the OHR has the lead in promoting State level security and defence identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to support developing structures and mechanisms that would allow the country in due course to fully integrate into international security and defence structures.

With the adoption of the BiH Defence Policy in May 2001, the Presidency successfully laid the foundation for this process. Moreover, it declared the willingness and readiness of BiH to join the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, and took initial decisions to restructure and upgrade the defence institutions, primarily the Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM) and its Secretariat, towards an effective and feasible mechanism in defence matters at State level.

In close co-operation with SFOR, OSCE and UN authorities, the OHR's Military Cell (MilCell) has contributed to these encouraging efforts, in particular by means of continuous close co-operation with the Military Advisors (MA) to the members of the Presidency, the SCMM, and interlocutors in the Ministries at State and Entity level.

This joint commitment towards internal consolidation, State building and international integration of BiH has borne fruit. During its latest visit to NATO HQ, Brussels, in March 2002, the Presidency announced immediate action to enhance the existing defence structures at State level. This should enable the country to fully meet the requirements of both its own mission spectrum, as set out in the Defence Policy, and its responsibilities and obligations related to the European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes.

Over three months, in pursuance of these ambitions, an MA's working group, supported by MilCell experts, has developed conceptual strategies to take adequate action. Its draft contribution to the BiH Security Policy, currently under review by the Council of Ministers Working Group, has been adopted by the Presidency. Moreover, by mid April, the MAs developed recommendations for strengthening State level institutions which include significant improvements related to the structure and functioning of SCMM and the Secretariat, and foresee the building of a Joint Chiefs of Defence Committee at the operational level. It is expected that these considerations will be presented to the Presidency for decision in May 2002.