

OHR's Statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference in Mostar

Security

There was an unspecified security threat yesterday and the OHR undertook standard security procedures on the advice of the responsible authorities in BiH. OHR is working normally today with law enforcement services present.

OHR cannot comment security issues – please contact the responsible BiH authorities.

LSG adoption

BiH is approaching a crucial phase in the process of local self-governance reform. The Law on Local Self Governance was adopted in its first reading by the Federation House of Peoples yesterday.

OHR commends the Federation Parliament for pushing the reform of local self-governance forward and urges parliamentarians to adopt legislation that complies with the principles of the European Charter on Local Self-Governance.

Local self-governance reform is designed to enhance the right of every adult citizen to have a say in municipal decisions that affect their interests, directly or indirectly – through their freely and democratically elected representatives. It is also designed to improve the way municipalities operate and improve the quality of the services they deliver to citizens.

Public hearings will now be held by the Federation Parliament in order to give everyone who wishes to comment on the Law on

Local Self Governance an opportunity to do so.

In addition, the constitutional commission of the FHoR has finalized its report on Local Self Governance, and has drawn up a set of constitutional amendments which in the view of the Council of Europe will comply with the relevant European principles and standards.

The Council of Europe recently stated that “ Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified the (Charter), but has not adopted legislation that complies with principles of the Charter.” This means that BiH has not fulfilled one of the pre-accession requirements for the Council of Europe and is in breach of its international obligations.

OHR expects the appropriate amendments to be put on the agenda of both houses and adopted soon.

Town Hall meetings on Police Restructuring

The European Union Police Mission (EUPM) and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) will continue a series of public meetings being held throughout BiH on police restructuring. Next weeks events will be held in Mostar, Trebinje and Nevesinje. The purpose of these meetings is to present the Police Restructuring Commission's (PRC) proposal to citizens, police, civil society representatives, and other interested stakeholders, and to open a broad dialogue on the ongoing process of police reform.

The EUPM will begin each meeting with information about the police restructuring process to explain the benefits of police restructuring, what it means for public security and why it is necessary. They will point out that police restructuring which will;

- make it much harder for criminals to operate. Right now,

police in BiH are at a disadvantage when compared to criminals who operate without hindrance across BiH.

- allow for significant savings in police administration, which means it will be possible to redirect budget funds to urgent needs in BiH society or, for example, to increase spending on schools and hospitals.
- give police officers better access to modern crime fighting technology
- equalize salaries and working conditions for police officers wherever they work in BiH.

The meetings will deconstruct the myths linked to police restructuring, which is not about abolishing the entities, or the Entity Ministry of Interiors – it's about creating an efficient police service, accountable to the community. Those who say police restructuring is a guise to abolish the entities are simply scare mongering.

The European Commission has made structural police reform a requirement for BiH to proceed to the next stage of accession to the European Union. Europe will not lower the bar on this issue; European taxpayers are as concerned about criminality as the BiH taxpayers are.

Each public meeting will focus on answering questions from members of the public.

The meetings will be held in the Hrvatski Dom Herceg Stjepan Kosača at 18:00 on 22 March, in the Conference Room of the Assembly Building in Trebinje at 18:00 on 23 March, and at the Municipal Assembly in Nevesinje at 18:00 on 24 March. Events are being planned in Mostar on 22 March, Trebinje on 23 March, and Nevesinje on 24 March, as well as other locations throughout BiH. Details of each event will be announced on local radio before each event.

Commendation for Mostar CC

OHR would like to use this opportunity to commend the decision taken by the city council last week when it announced plans to take over the founding rights for 25 public institutions and unify a range of social and welfare centers. This is a positive step forward.