

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

Press conference have been canceled due to a power cut.

This statement was subsequently sent to Banja Luka media outlets via e-mail.

BiH is A Sovereign State, the RS is not

The OHR is once again in the position where it has to remind the highest levels of the RS authorities about the nature of the RS's status as an Entity, under the Dayton Peace Agreement. The Dayton Peace Agreement provides certain guarantees to the RS, provided the RS recognises the sovereignty of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina – not the other way around.

Despite this, the RS Prime Minister's Office has chosen to criticise the Chairman of the Council of Ministers' visit this week to Brussels. Mr Mikerevic often refers to the Dayton Constitution. Article III.1., which defines matters that are the responsibility of the state institutions, states that foreign policy is the responsibility of the state. It is not the responsibility of the entities.

The Deputy Chair of the RS Council of Peoples is reported in today's press to be alluding to the "sovereignty of the RS". The term "sovereignty" is, by definition, reserved for sovereign states, not entities. BiH is a sovereign state. The Entities are not. The RS must recognize this and stop to behave as if it were a state and not an entity.

There is an unhelpful tendency for some individuals and institutions to pick and choose those points of the Dayton Peace Agreement that suit them. Dayton is not an a la carte

menu. It is an agreement that must be taken as a whole and recognized as a whole.

Those who issue such statements are undermining the reputation of the country abroad, at a time in which it is most important for BiH, as the country approaches the question of membership of Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Key Legislation in the Council Of Ministers Today

Today the Council of Ministers will consider two key legal packages. Both legislative packages are aimed at getting BiH moving.

The amendments to the Civil Service Law will help speed up the recruitment process of civil servants by the Civil Service Agency, and they will address problems that have arisen in the course of implementing the Law.

These amendments are part of the Government's Joint Action Plan, which seeks to make the State ministries and the CoM fully operational. Staffing levels at Ministries are inadequate and this is having a negative impact on the capacity of the BiH Government to work effectively and to implement the numerous reforms it has taken on.

Resolving this issue means giving the authorities the capacity they need to deliver better services to citizens. OHR urges the adoption and subsequent implementation of these amendments, which are an important step towards giving BiH a more effective civil service.

The BiH Railways Law will establish a Railway Regulatory Board at the BiH Ministry of Transport and Communications. This Board will in due course become the regulatory body and licensing authority for BiH, issuing and revoking licences, safety certificates and permits. A single regulatory body that is independent of train operators and infrastructure managers is an EU requirement.

This Law will provide BiH with basic legislation that is needed in order to revitalise rail transport. This is a prerequisite for economic takeoff, because companies such as BH Steel and other potentially major employers cannot expand and create more jobs unless there is a rail network that can take their products to market.

PDHR Visits Tuzla Tomorrow

The Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, will be in Tuzla tomorrow, where he will meet representatives from local communities in the region. Discussion will focus on the role of municipalities and the services they deliver to citizens. Ambassador Hays will meet the representatives of the Centre for Civil Initiatives, an NGO working on issues related to local self-governance. Meetings will cover the unsustainable cost of governance in BiH. Public spending currently eats up more than half of GDP.

In Brussels last week the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council called on the State and Entity authorities to address this issue.

At 15:00 the Principal Deputy High Representative will participate in a live radio programme on Kamaleon Radio, where he will outline his conclusions from the visit.