

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference

HR on Tour

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is this morning in Siroki Brijeg, where he will meet Mayor Miljenko Jergic and other municipal officials. During his two-day visit to the Western BiH municipalities of Livno and Siroki Brijeg, the High Representative will emphasise in his discussions with local officials that *implementing* reforms is what BiH must concentrate on now – not just enacting new legislation.

Enacting laws, issuing decrees and making commitments are merely first steps in reform. For BiH to fulfil the 16 Feasibility Study priorities and integrate further in Euro-Atlantic structures, and if life is to become measurably better for citizens, the authorities must fully implement reforms. BiH citizens will taste the fruits of success in this endeavour – or they will have to put up with the consequences of failure if the authorities are unable to turn reforming laws into real reforms on the ground.

The High Representative will discuss with local officials the OHR's priorities for the coming months, which revolve around helping the BiH authorities to:

- complete the administrative and logistical arrangements and pass the laws required to consolidate reform of the Defence, Police and Intelligence sectors;
- make the BiH State Court and the expanded BiH Council of Ministers fully operational;
- complete preparations for the introduction of VAT, and carry out the consolidation of the customs

- administrations;
- facilitate and guarantee the self-governing status of Brcko District.

Cleaning up Procurement in BiH

The BiH House of Representatives yesterday passed the Law on Public Procurement. This is a huge step forward in fighting corruption in BiH and finally ending a system in which public contracts go to companies that have personal connections with officials responsible for organizing tenders.

Under the new law (which is in line with EU legislation and international best practice) competing bids for public contracts will be made public, and officials responsible for public tenders will be legally obliged to explain their reasons for selecting one company over another. The law, which would apply to public tenders throughout BiH, lays out in detail the steps that companies may take in order to secure legal remedies if they feel they have been dishonestly excluded from public contracts.

The OHR welcomes the passage of this law, which will reduce the scope for fraud in public contracts thereby helping to improve public services in BiH.