

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

SIPA discussion in CoM on Thursday key test of BiH's seriousness on national security

The OHR this week is looking to the Council of Ministers to make serious legislative progress, which will put in place key national security institutions.

Ten days ago the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Adnan Terzic, set ambitious but necessary deadlines for his colleagues in the Council of Ministers for considering the package of laws to strengthen BiH's capacity to fight organized crime. He announced that the CoM would this week review the package of laws to strengthen BiH's ability to fight organised crime. BiH is the only country in Europe that does not have a state level police agency with responsibility to fight serious and organised crime, and this is one of the reasons that BiH is being used by organised crime as a base and a corridor into Europe. The citizens of BiH suffer the consequences of this every day, most visibly last Sunday when someone was murdered in broad daylight in Sarajevo with a machine gun, apparently in connection with the drugs mafia.

The High Representative has welcomed the prime minister's commitment to put in place institutions capable of ridding BiH and its citizens of this deadly scourge. His colleagues in the Council of Ministers, and the RS Minister of Police Mr Djeric, now face a crucial test: are they also prepared to put aside their narrow political differences in the interest of the citizens of BiH as a whole and the fight against crime? Are they prepared to give this country what every other country in Europe has: a state level police agency capable of fighting

serious crime right across the country, and complementing the work of the State Court and the State Prosecutors' Office, who are already locking up money launders and women traffickers?

There is another reason why the Council of Ministers, and Mr Djerić and his colleagues in the RS, will want to support this Anti-Crime package – a reason linked directly to this country's integration into Europe.

This Anti-Crime package is also one of the 16 pre-requisites of the EC's feasibility study. The EU rightly considers this a crucial reform. All the citizens of Europe are paying the price for the fact BiH does not have adequate institutions to prevent drugs, trafficked women or the criminals who go with them using this country as a corridor into Europe.

This package includes legislation to strengthen the State Investigation and Protection Agency, BiH's witness protection programme, BiH's anti-money-laundering framework, and professionalism in the police. This Police agency, supported by a State Intelligence Agency, would tackle international, inter-entity and serious crime, and to help ensure BiH meets international responsibilities to break up organised crime and plays a meaningful role in the global fight against terrorism.

There has been a lot of misinformation about these reforms. SIPA will not replace the RS Ministry of Interior. Instead, it will at last give this country something that every other country in Europe has and rightly considers essential in the fight against serious and organised crime: a state level police agency. Its task would be to investigate crimes under the State Criminal Code, and complement the work of the State Court and Prosecutor's Office. Many of those who opposed setting up a state police agency also opposed the establishment of the State Court and State Prosecutors' Office. But as we've seen in recent weeks these institutions are now proving their worth in the fight against organised crime. Former presidents, the deputy head of the Interpol

Office in BiH, money launders, women traffickers and others have been charged, and some already found guilty and sentenced. These institutions are beginning to show that nobody, no matter how rich, no matter how well connected politically, no matter how dangerous – is above the law.

In short, this Anti-Crime package is a key test of whether your leaders are prepared to take the national security of this country seriously.

We look forward to seeing the Council of Minister's decision on Thursday.