

Gregorian: Wasting Police Reform Opportunity Would Be Tragic

After nearly three years of discussion, an agreement on police reform is within reach and it would be tragic to waste this opportunity, Principal Deputy High Representative Raffi Gregorian wrote in a newspaper column published today.

In the article, which appeared in Republika Srpska's best selling daily *Euroblic*,

Mr Gregorian compared today's attitudes to police reform with attitudes to defence reform three years ago.

"To get constructive discussion [on defence reform] underway it was necessary to overcome a great deal of fear and misinformation. The prospects for reaching agreement were considered slim," the Principal Deputy High Representative wrote. "I know. I was there."

Prior to joining the Office of the High Representative, Mr Gregorian served as political adviser to NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina and co-chair of the Defence Reform Commission.

"Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a NATO-compatible single armed forces. And the country is a member of NATO's Partnership-for-Peace programme, the first rung on the ladder to eventual NATO membership," Mr Gregorian wrote. "Citizens are benefiting directly, in terms of enhanced security, because their political leaders had the courage and the vision to reach agreement."

"As with defence reform, agreement on police restructuring will only be reached if politicians overcome fear and apprehension, find common ground and put a restructuring plan in place, he continued.

"Police reform has a simple core objective - it is to make Bosnia and Herzegovina a safer place for all its citizens. Nobody can seriously claim the current arrangement is ideal," Mr Gregorian wrote. "The sooner agreement is reached, the sooner crime can be tackled effectively. The sooner this happens, the sooner Bosnia and Herzegovina can move forward on its journey to the European Union."

"If political leaders rise to the challenge, they will help clear the way towards a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union," the Principal Deputy High Representative concluded.

The text of the Principal Deputy High Representative's article can be accessed at www.ohr.int.