

Article by Raffi Gregorian, Principal Deputy High Representative

Wasting Opportunity Would Be Tragic

Just three years ago, defence reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina was considered impossible. To get constructive discussion underway it was necessary to overcome a great deal of fear and misinformation. The prospects for reaching agreement were considered slim. I know. I was there.

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. 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.

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. 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.

After nearly three years of discussion, agreement is within reach. If political leaders rise to the challenge, they will help clear the way towards a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union. Squandering this opportunity would be tragic.

Raffi Gregorian is Principal Deputy High Representative and was formerly co-chair of the Defence Reform Commission