

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

Quantum Leap Forward in BiH's Path to European Integration

As you know, BiH negotiators will today begin talks in Sarajevo with representatives of the European Commission on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement. If BiH concludes an agreement – and this could be done as early as the end of this year – it would represent a quantum leap forward in this country's path to full integration with the rest of Europe.

The High Representative has called on BiH's leaders to "seize this opportunity before the doors to Europe close." BiH must demonstrate, quickly and conclusively – that it is a serious candidate for membership. Europe will have no patience if BiH's leaders show any tendency to dither.

The High Representative has urged BiH's leaders to assume responsibility and take the initiative in keeping the process on track, "ushering in a period of intense activity and effort so as to bring quickly to all BiH's citizens the benefits of an ever closer relationship with the EU."

"Speedy progress," he adds, "will require determination, commitment – and most important of all – concrete results. Results will take BiH to Europe and results will create job opportunities."

HR Attends First Meeting of BiH Police Directorate

The High Representative will tomorrow attend the first meeting of the BiH Directorate for Police Restructuring.

The Directorate has been established under a Council of Ministers Decision following the adoption of the EC approved Agreement on Police Reform in October last year.

The Directorate is a technical body made up of BiH police experts, who, under the terms of the political agreement adopted by Entity and State Parliaments, are due to produce an implementation plan by September this year.

The importance of the work of this Directorate cannot be overstated. BiH citizens routinely allude to rising crime as one of their greatest concerns, and the rise of organised crime in BiH and the extension of its influence to other countries has become a major concern among BiH's European partners. The work of the Police Directorate will make a direct and positive contribution to tackling this problem.

High Representative to Visit Srebrenica

At the conclusion of a three-day farewell tour of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will visit Srebrenica, on Wednesday 25 January 2006.

On his arrival in Srebrenica, the High Representative will meet Mayor Abdurahman Malkic and representatives of the Association of Mothers of Srebrenica and, together with them, pay his respects to the victims of the Srebrenica Massacre, at the Potocari Memorial Centre.

The High Representative will visit returnees to Srebrenica with whom he and his wife, Jane, have stayed in the past.

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is making a three-day farewell tour of Bosnia and Herzegovina starting in Trebinje and Mostar on 23 January 2006, and then moving on to Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje and Banja Luka on 24 January, and Srebrenica on 25 January 2006. Besides meeting political representatives, the aim of the visit is to meet with BiH citizens and discuss changes that have taken place in this country over the last three and a half

years.