

HR/EUSR Meets New NATO Force Commander For Southern Europe



The High Representative/EU Special Representative, Miroslav Lajčák, met in Sarajevo today the NATO Commander of the Allied Joint Force Command in Naples, Admiral Fitzgerald. As Commander of AFC South, Admiral Fitzgerald's operational responsibility includes NATO missions in the Balkans.

The High Representative/EU Special Representative and the Commander of AFC South concluded that the defence property transfer process, agreed to in July 2007 by State and Entity Prime Ministers, must move forward as a matter of urgency. This is a matter of security, and a requirement of the Defence Law. It is also essential for BiH to progress further towards full NATO membership.

In this regard, the High Representative/EU Special Representative and Admiral Fitzgerald welcomed the North Atlantic Council's approval this week to allow BiH to develop an 'Individual Partnership Action Plan' (IPAP).

BiH is now expected to develop an IPAP Presentation Document as the basis upon which the IPAP itself will be developed in cooperation with NATO. The approval by the North Atlantic Council is in recognition of the progress BiH is making in defence reform and is a useful instrument for the successful completion of defence sector reform. It puts BiH on a firmer footing for the next phase of defence reforms – the Membership Action Plan – which could take BiH from the Partnership for

Peace to full membership of NATO.

The HR/EUSR also gave Adm. Fitzgerald an assessment of the current political situation in BiH, including progress on police reform and the prospects for meeting the conditions for the signing of the SAA in the first half of 2008. The HR/EUSR underlined that there is no alternative to eventual accession of BiH to the Union and set out how the EU will continue to support BiH in order to make progress in this regard.