

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

The Law on Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices to be considered on August 29

The Law on Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices will be considered in the BiH House of Representatives next week on Tuesday 29 August.

The adoption of this Law would bring a series of benefits. It would help make medicines safer and cheaper. It would guarantee access to high-quality medicines by establishing uniform conditions for the manufacturing, testing and sale of pharmaceuticals and measures to ensure their quality, safety and efficiency. And it would bring benefits to the state itself by establishing a single pharmaceuticals market, supervision over it, establishing the State regulator, and preventing unfair competition. The Law prevents manufacturers and wholesalers from engaging in the retail sale of prescription drugs. This protects consumers and indirectly facilitates control over the price of pharmaceuticals.

The Law is also crucial for implementation of the Law on prevention and suppression of the abuse of narcotics. This is directly linked to BiH's fulfilment of its international obligations.

At present, the BiH pharmaceuticals market is chaotic and fragmented. Different Entity laws regulate the manufacture and sale of pharmaceuticals and medical devices. This holds back investment and development. In addition, safeguards for public health in this sector are inadequate.

The importance of the Law was recognised by the Peace Implementation Council in its Communiqué of 23 June. More so, the Law is considered in the context of ongoing negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Commission.

Scare-mongering media campaigns that attempt to portray the Law as causing chaos in the pharmaceuticals market, are mounted by firms who wish to retain their privileged place in the market. They have nothing to do with the protection of domestic production or health gains for BiH citizens.

The Office of the High Representative calls on parliamentarians to recognise the benefits this Law brings to the country; to prioritise the public health of citizens over company's interest; and to adopt the Law on August 29.