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

OHR Comment on Police Directorate Session Yesterday

The focus of the discussion in the Police Directorate yesterday was on the first EC principle of police reform which states that all legislative and budgetary competencies for all police matters must be vested at the State level. This principle was adopted by the RSNA together with the BiH and FBiH legislatures

The meaning of the first principle is self-evident: only the BiH Parliamentary Assembly will adopt laws on all police matters in BiH with no possibility of entity or cantonal laws on police matters, and only the state will adopt the budget for all police matters, and all police bodies will be funded through this budget. However it seems that RS PM is not ready to accept this, despite the October 5 Political agreement adopted by the RSNA, with the support of SNSD and SDS votes.

The Directorate members negotiated all day in good faith and in the end were voting on a text that was the result of a compromise, a text which included comments from all sides including the RS. Nothing in the actions the Directorate took yesterday excluded proposals from the RS.

The Directorate is well behind in it's work because of RS rejection of proposals brought to the table, yet the RS has failed to bring to the table a single proposal that would meet the three EC principles. Continuing down this path is the surest way to delay BiH's EU integration process. That is why if there is no consensus then the Directorate is bound to move ahead with the support of the majority of BiH's technical police experts. It is in the competence of the Police Directorate to complete its task on time.

As you know the High Representative is in Vienna today where he is lobbying EU Ministers of

Interior to reassess the visa regime in place for BiH citizens. The signal that hat BiH is rejecting a Police reform that is in line with EU standards and that aims to ensure the country can police it’s own territory can only have a negative impact on any possibility of easing the visa regime.

All in BiH need to sit up and take note of the EC’s Decision yesterday with regard SCG: it clearly shows that the EC is ready to stand behind its conditionality.