

SDHR Ney Congratulates DRC on Achievements

“The Defence Reform Commission (DRC) has been a leading proponent for positive change in BiH. The emphasis of today is on modernising the BiH armed forces so that they can operate effectively in the context of integration into NATO and regional security”, said OHR’s Senior Deputy High Representative Ambassador Martin Ney, in his address at the last session of the DRC today.

Establishing democratic oversight over the Armed Forces of BiH was one of the cornerstones of the High Representative decision to set up the DRC in May 2003, but it was the parliamentary assemblies that passed the laws that will transform the entity armies into a NATO-compatible single BiH military force. “Through the DRC” said Ambassador Ney, “the armed forces have been transformed into a force for stability”.

Ambassador Ney said that the BiH authorities, and in particular the RS Authorities, must now prove their commitment to international justice. They must “pursue Karadzic and Mladic energetically. Unless there is full co-operation with The Hague – and the Chief Prosecutor said again yesterday that Banja Luka needs to do more – BiH cannot move decisively down the road to Euro-Atlantic integration”. The Peace Implementation Council in 15 December stated that the recent arrest of Ante Gotovina, based on the cooperation of the Government of Croatia, represents the kind of approach that the BiH authorities must take .

Ambassador Ney reiterated that legislative work remains to be done before entering into the implementation phase in January

2006, if the Defence reform is to become a reality, both on parliamentary oversight, but also on practical implementation

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- At the State Level Parliament needs to make changes to BiH's Criminal Code, and the Law on Ministries.
- The RSNA must adopt four Laws, which would clarify that the RS's role in Defence has ended. In addition, the RS Government needs to sign the Transfer Agreement that would complete the transition of responsibility for Defence to the State Level.
- The FBiH Parliament needs to fully adopt five Laws to clarify that the responsibility for Defence has now passed to the State level.

The deadline for the passage of this legislation is close.