

# Statement: HR Welcomes EU Foreign Ministers Decision

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, today extended his congratulations to the Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Adnan Terzic, the Director of the Directorate for European Integration, Osman Topcagic, and other leaders in BiH, following the decision by the European Union Foreign Ministers, meeting in Brussels, to accept the European Commission's 21 October recommendation that the EU open Stabilisation and Association negotiations with BiH.

The High Representative noted that the arduous process of administrative and legislative reform that has brought BiH to this position has been driven by cross-party cooperation and pragmatic compromise. He said that in every country that has successfully joined the EU, government and opposition parties have joined forces to promote the process necessary to succeed on the path to Europe.

"Every single citizen can benefit from the possibilities opened up by the launch of SAA negotiations," the High Representative said. "The political leadership must make sure that benefits are optimized and delivered as soon as possible. This process should not be delayed by inter-party or inter-ethnic squabbling".

"It is now absolutely imperative that BiH approach the start of SAA negotiations with seriousness. Finalising the PBS legislation and meeting the deadlines Bosnia's Parliaments have themselves set on Police Reform will be the first test that the EU will apply", the High Representative said.