

High Representative Calls on Political Parties to Continue Vlasic Process

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, has expressed his disappointment that today's meeting on police restructuring among political parties failed to yield clear results because some of the parties that were invited failed to attend. The aim of the meeting – which was chaired jointly by the High Representative and BiH Prime Minister Adnan Terzic – was to continue the process that was initiated at Vlasic, in order to secure a political agreement on police restructuring in the first half of September.

The parties present at the meeting agreed to support the establishment of a working group at the government level that will draw up a proposal on which to base further negotiations among political parties. Provided this succeeds, there will be a meeting at the beginning of September in order to reach a political agreement on police restructuring to be put to the parliaments.

Once formed, the working group will focus its work on issues that were not formally discussed at the Vlasic meeting – namely the EU requirement that regional police areas be based on functionality and not politics.

However, the High Representative said that the working group will not be able to begin its work until those parties which failed to attend – namely the SDS, SNSD and DNS – explicitly endorse the process by sending a letter to the Council of Ministers and the OHR.

“We have an agreement from those who attended the meeting. But we have not made progress because of the lack of seriousness

on the part of those parties that failed to send anyone. This is very worrying given the fact that an agreement on police restructuring is a condition for starting the Stabilisation and Association process," the High Representative said.

"Those who decide that playing small opposition politics comes before their country's EU future cannot be a serious opposition party. In the absence of these letters there can be no further progress," he added.

He said that he also expects a letter from the PDP clarifying the party's position, and expressing its commitment to participating in talks in September. The High Representative said that he is not prepared to initiate talks on police restructuring in September unless the leaders of all the political parties that took part in Vlasic are present.

"It is important to maintain the Vlasic process. There is no country that has joined the EU in the past few years without forming a cross party political consensus on issues that are vital to progressing towards EU membership. We must build a consensus among political parties bearing in mind also that any proposal will have to be approved by parliaments," said the High Representative.