

High Representative Acts To Ensure SIPA Development

At the request of BiH Prime Minister Adnan Terzic the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, today appointed Sredoje Novic to the position of the Director of the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA). The High Representative took this Decision following seven months of uncertainty over this appointment.

In appointing Mr Novic, the High Representative has upheld the European principal of removing politics from policing, nominating the candidate who was rated to be the best qualified by the BiH Council of Ministers' own Selection Committee. Mr Novic received the highest score in an open competition undertaken under the Law on Ministerial and Government Appointments by the Council of Ministers' Selection Committee.

The Council of Ministers has for the last month been unable to come to a final decision on whom to appoint. This continued vacuum at the highest level of the Agency threatened to undermine SIPA's work in its crucial fight against organised crime, illegal immigration, international terrorism, money laundering, serious economic crime and undermine its efforts to apprehend indicted war criminals.

A functioning State Investigation and Protection Agency is also a key requirement of the BiH Feasibility Study. With Mr Novic as SIPA's acting director, the Agency has made significant inroads to becoming BiH's premier law enforcement institution; the number of employees has risen to 435, and 300 additional staff have been selected and are waiting to be appointed by the Director; all the agency's departments are fully operational; in only four months the Financial

Intelligence Department froze more than 1,3 million KM of illegal assets relating to organised crime. SIPA is currently investigating 30 cases of organized and serious financial crime.

Mr Novic's appointment as SIPA Director comes into effect immediately. The Law on Police Officials of BiH gives the SIPA Director a four-year mandate. The short-term appointment of the Acting Director of SIPA expired on 24 April 2005.