Remarks by the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, at Press Conference on legal environment regarding individuals affected by HR's Decisions

Good Morning,

Thank you for coming.

I wanted to speak to you today because I want to make public the first developments in a process that I have already announced.

On 4 March, I indicated that we have reached a point where it is now possible for me to consider the start of a phased reversal – where it is safe to do so and where circumstances allow – of some of the removal Decisions made by High Representatives between 1998 and 2003.

While the removal of officials who obstructed this country's return to normality has helped break the deadlock engineered by opponents of the Datyon Peace Agreement, circumstances change.

In March, I made it clear that the removal of recalcitrant officials from public life is an extraordinary measure, that it is a direct intervention in the political and legal process of this country. And that, therefore, there is a requirement to keep these bans, which were always regarded as being temporary, under constant review and to lift them when appropriate.

In March, I announced a formal procedure for considering candidates for whom bans might be lifted.

Let me briefly outline the system.

- Stage One: Cases have been identified as ones where the ban on participation in public life can reasonably be lifted with no threat to the stability of the country, to the application of the DPA or to the health of BiH's democracy.
- Stage Two: Background checks have been carried out on the individuals concerned, so as to ensure that there will be no negative effect on the peace process should the bans be lifted, and to recommend any specific conditions that might be applied on lifting the bans should they be required.
- Stage Three: There has been a review within the OHR of the findings of the background check, and these have been presented to me.
- Stage Four: Taking all of the above into account, together with a commitment signed by the individuals concerned to uphold the Dayton Peace Agreement and the Constitution of BiH the bar imposed under the previous Decisions has been lifted.

This has now completed completed its work and made recommendations to me.

On the basis of these recommendations, I have decided to lift the ban on three people because the operating environment in which these removals were made has changed.

The people I have decided to lift the ban on are Zeljko Trivan, Branka Dadic and Marina Deronjic. All have signed the commitment to uphold the Dayton Peace Agreement and the Constitution of BiH.

Zelko Trivan and Marina Deronjic were both removed for obstructing property law implementation. The property laws

have now largely been implemented and my decision reflects these changed circumstances. The names of others who committed a similar offense under similar circumstances and who were removed will be reviewed.

Branka Dadic was removed for her role in promoting “Croat self-rule”. She was a receiver of orders, rather than someone who gave them, and I have taken this into account when making my decision.

I have announced only three names today. However, this process will now continue. There will be further announcements in the future.

This is a painstaking process. It has to be, because we must ensure that no reversals are put into effect that would recreate circumstances that could produce the same negative activities that the original Decisions were designed to forestall. This is going to be a steady and incremental process.

I have written to the three individuals concerned expressing my hope that they will use this opportunity to contribute to the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina in a way that is consistent with their renewed and solemn commitment to uphold the DPA.

We will continue to inform the public about the lifting of further bans in a timely manner.

Thank you