

OHR's Statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference in Banja Luka

The Current Progress on Co-operation With the ICTY Must Be Maintained

"The nine year old policy of obstruction in the RS is giving way to a constructive engagement with the ICTY", the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, told Javier Solana, the EU HR for Foreign Policy and Security Affairs when they met late last night in Brussels. But he also underlined that "additional efforts to bring all those indicted to justice must be made. This is a process that can not be complete until Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic are in The Hague". The High Representative noted the transfer to the Hague of six indicted war criminals during the past three months. The High Representative welcomed this as a step forward in a process which must be maintained, and stepped up.

Commenting reports that Ratko Mladic continues to hide in Belgrade, the High Representative noted that submitting himself to the Hague ought to be a matter of military honour for Ratko Mladic, given that his subordinates are currently facing justice at the Tribunal for crimes that they committed while obeying his orders.

Welcoming the progress made by BiH in a number of Feasibility Study priorities including the Judiciary and customs and taxation, the High Representative and Javier Solana agreed that BiH must focus on making significant progress on all outstanding issues as identified by the European Commission's Feasibility Study. Tangible progress must be made by mid May when EC experts will be in Bosnia and Herzegovina to assess achievements.

PIC meeting today

As we speak the BiH authorities, led by Prime Minister Adnan Terzic and including the BiH Defence Minister, Nikola Radovanovic, RS President Dragan Cavic, and RS Minister of Interior Darko Matijasevic will make their presentations to PIC on the steps they have taken in order to move forward with key reforms, focusing on Police Restructuring, Defence Reform, economic and institutional reforms related to the Feasibility Study requirements, and cooperation with the ICTY.

This PIC is particularly important as it is the last ahead of a series of crucial meetings later this month and in May at which the status of BiH's aspirations to join NATO's PfP and begin Stabilisation and Association negotiations with the EU will be discussed.

The PIC will issue its communiqué later in the day.

HR meets with NATO Secretary General

This Afternoon the High Representative will meet with NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. We hope to have more details on this meeting later in the day.