

Remarks by the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown at the Press Conference on the next Phase in Police Public Information Campaign

- check against delivery -

Thank you for coming along today to this launch – this is the latest element of the information campaign that has been running since January.

I'm pleased to be able to show you two new TV ad's that are going out today for the first time and are planned to run throughout April.

We are getting closer to the EU's next assessment of BiH's progress towards completion of the Feasibility Study. In May this year EU experts will be in BiH to assess the progress that BiH is making on the sixteen conditions set out in BiH's feasibility Study for the start of negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

It is worth pointing up that we have seen ICTY co-operation in BiH developing; last week Vinko Pandurevic, became the 5th indicted war criminal to be transferred to the ICTY this year by the Republika Srpska; after nine years of inactivity and obstruction this is a very welcome development.

Of course only when all outstanding indictees including Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, are transferred will this process be complete – but these are encouraging signs of progress for the EU.

If this progress continues it means that Police reform could remain the one last big issue that needs to be addressed before BiH begins SAA negotiations.

And in this regard I'm pleased to say that increasingly discussions on Police restructuring are focussing on the elements of the reform itself – we are moving beyond the knee-jerk negative reaction to change, and into the constructive period of negotiation with this reform.

I'm pleased that there is a general acceptance from all sides in BiH that we are moving towards more formal discussions.

Let me set out the timetable, as I see it, for you:

In mid May we can expect the EC Consultative task force to arrive in BiH to assess BiH's progress on the 16 requirements of the Feasibility Study.

If we are to convince them that there has been progress, and that there is a serious commitment to reform then we need an agreement that will clearly show that all BiH's legislative institutions support reform that reflects the EU's three basic requirements of reform;

First, to place exclusive competence for police legislation and budget at the State level.

Second, to recast regional police areas on the basis of functional police criteria, and;

Third, to help protect the police from improper political interference.

It is important to underline that the EU is not going to change its standards or requirements: if anyone still has such hopes then they are very mistaken.

At the end of this month, parties will be convened to start formal negotiations about police restructuring

And while the three EU requirements must be met, there will be room for compromise.

OK, let us take a look at the campaign, which we are launching today –

These ads started running today; FTV viewers at 08.00 this morning were the first to see them.

They will run on BiH's main TV networks for the next four weeks. "City-lights" posters linked to the TV campaign also appeared today across BiH.

The campaign reinforces the message that a single structure of policing will:

- help free police from political interference
- give policemen and policewomen a professional service, with access to modern equipment, proper career structures and better salaries, benefits and training.
- is designed on the basis of technical, law enforcement criteria by policing professionals to create an effective policing environment and,
- is a requirement for EU accession.

The OHR media and public information campaign is running in conjunction with the campaign being run by the EUPM and the cross BiH round tables organised by OHR and EUPM.

The current policing system in BiH is too complicated, too expensive, and not sufficiently effective in combating crime.

Police restructuring represents a way of overcoming systemic deficiencies in the organization of policing in BiH. It provides a means of achieving European best practice in an effective and efficient police service for BiH citizens.

A fact sheet with details of producers, costs and so on will be available after this conference.

Does anyone have any questions...?