Remarks by the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, at the Press Conference on Police Re-Structuring

Police Restructuring Commission Map 9+1

I will make three statements on the Police Reform Commission and the choice of maps and then we'll take the questions.

I want to begin by first of all by expressing my welcome to you and my thanks to Prime Minister Martens and members of the PRC for their very hard work. They produced a bold and far-reaching reform of the current policing system in BiH aimed at brining it up to the best European standards – a system which we have at present which is currently in desperate need of reform and which everyone agrees from the citizens through the police structures to the finance ministers who have to pay for police force twice as expensive as for instance Hungary and Slovenia –everybody agrees that the system does not function properly at the moment.

Incidentally, I think that the heart of that report is a concept which perhaps in this country and the other Balkan country's people find difficult to get hold of, which is that under European standards the citizens control the police not the politicians. The people who provide oversight for the police are actually the citizens that police serve. And when this report is published later this week, I am pretty sure that one of the propositions you will overlook, which you shouldn't, will be the proposition for police councils in each area which draw up an annual police plan which the citizens participate in and help to shape the structure of police. So

that instead of having police controlled by politicians you have police controlled by citizens. But let me come back to the point of today.

I have called this press conference to present my decision on the regional breakdown for police in BiH. Let me put this in context. The Police Restructuring Commission could not, unfortunately, reach a conclusion which was consistent with all three of the European Commission's fundamental principles, on which all parties agreed. Chairman Martens has therefore submitted a report which he will publish later this week perhaps on Wednesday, a report which puts forward proposals which he believes represent the widest spectrum of opinion on the Commission. At the conclusion of the Chairman's report, he forwarded to the OHR three maps depicting the territorial breakdown of the local police areas as options for further consultation and consideration, and ultimately decision by me and recommendation to him as to which map should go forward as part of the Chairman's report. So, what we are producing here, let me underline, is not the High Representative's report it is the Chairman's report which becomes complete when it has a third map attached to it.

I and Commissioner Carty have during this past month held extensive bilateral discussions with officials involved in police reform, experts, political parties and leaders. I have worked closely with Ambassador Humphreys, given the importance of this reform in the EU Stabilisation and Accession process

I have now reached a conclusion as to which map should be adopted as part of the Chairman's report and have recommended this to Chairman Martens, who has accepted it. As a result, the Martens report with the map attached is now complete and will be published this week . It will then become the context for further discussions, consultations and, hopefully, consensus over the months ahead.

In taking my decision I have continually asked myself the

question how the new regional breakdown can best help serve the operational needs of the police.

The aim of the Police Restructuring Commission was very clear: to propose an effective single structure of policing for BiH, designed on the basis of technical criteria that protect police from improper political interference. The new design of police areas being announced today will make police more effective in fighting crime.

My proposal today will lay out the broad regional outline. It is an initial delineation. It's the big picture but not necessarily the final one. If there are specific local issues in relation to a municipality here or there, on the particular choice of police administrative centres, this can be discussed at a later stage in which will seek to reach common agreement and consensus.

The variants forwarded to the OHR showed three options – a breakdown showing five local policing areas, a breakdown showing nine local policing areas plus a Greater Sarajevo Metropolitan Police Area, and a breakdown showing eleven areas. I want to explain that the Greater Sarajevo Metropolitan Police Area proposed in the 9+ 1 map comprises the Sarajevo city municipalities in the Federation as well as the city municipalities of East Sarajevo in the Republika Srpska. The delineation of the Sarajevo Area is in fact exactly the same as pre-war Sarajevo in its bounders.

Extensive consultations with police revealed that the map depicting five regions, and the map depicting nine regions, plus Sarajevo , are a huge improvement over the current fractured and fragmented situation.

Both of those two ensure effective police co-operation across the Inter Entity Boundary Line. Both would help free policing from inter-entity and cantonal politics. Neither allows the IEBL or cantonal lines in the Federation to act as barriers to

effective policing.

In the opinion of the police experts I consulted, especially the European Union's own Police Mission, EUPM, the proposal of eleven areas failed to provide an appropriate framework for effective policing and failed to deliver policing areas that are sufficiently multi-ethnic in character, another of criteria which I considered I have accepted this judgment.

I have further concluded that as between the map with five areas and the map of the nine areas plus Sarajevo , the nine plus one map offers the best solution. Let me explain why:

1. It sets up compact policing areas that are best suited to BiH's mountainous terrain, while cutting through the current mono-ethnic lines. Mono-ethnicity is not part of this map, multi-ethnicity is, as far as that can be done in BiH.
2. Smaller areas mean shorter distance between policing centers and outlying areas.
3. This will cut the emergency response time between a reported crime and police arriving on the scene.
4. It will bring police closer to the citizens, reflecting EU best practice in community policing. Remember the importance of citizens providing oversight not politicians. This provides better, closest, contact between citizens and police.
5. It will shorten the chain of command from the Police Head Quarters to the community police official in the street.

The map of five regions had certain operational drawbacks.

The larger regions created long distances between policing centers and outlying areas.

In some proposed areas such as the Banja Luka region, the distance between the police center and the RS capital and outlying regions was as much as 140 km. 140 km of winding

mountain roads.

In the larger police areas of the 5 map, community oversight over police commissioner and performance of police became less direct. This is not what we want.

The nine areas plus Sarajevo map produces operational efficiencies not found in the five region map.

It will also mean huge cost savings from today's overstaffed and inefficient set-up.

Let me remind you that police in Sarajevo spend 9% of public expenditure. In Hungary that is 4,5%, in Slovenia that is 3,7%. Our police are about twice as expensive because of the duplication as any other standard European police force.

With the Chairman's report now complete and about to be published, we are now ready to move forward to the next phase. Public consultation, so that all in BiH understand why police reform is necessary.

There are five reasons why BiH needs this reform

1. Firstly, we urgently need to save money. Our present police structure is too complex and costs twice as much as the police in Slovenia and Hungary.
2. Secondly, we need this to give policemen a better deal. Why should the RS police be paid half what they are in the Federation.
3. Thirdly, we can never ask for visa-free travel without the effective rule of law in BiH – you can't achieve that with 13 police forces.
4. Fourthly, as the European Commission have made clear, no police reform is required for further progress to Europe. Progress on police restructuring is a requirement for moving towards a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU.
5. And lastly, over 13 police forces helps the criminal and

hinders the police. BiH’s people need a police structure which helps the police catch criminals, not criminals to avoid police

After a period of consultation comes the time of decision.

The BiH and Entity Governments will then have to assess and move this reform forward. It can only be done by consensus. This is a Dayton distributed competence, this cannot be imposed, it must be agreed to. If it cannot be agreed, it cannot go forward and BiH’s future in Europe may well in consequence not be able to be pushed forward in the way which we otherwise hope.

Let me conclude. Over the next few months, we will continue to set out the arguments in favour of police reform. Citizens, policemen and policewomen are entitled to hear them and make up their own minds. I am confident that if they hear the arguments and ignore the scare stories, they will be persuaded that this is the only way to secure a more efficient police force, better able to fight crime.

Our aims are simple and they are three:

- put the citizens close to police and stop politicians interfering with police
- put the criminals in jail rather than escaping from the police by hiding behind entity and canton border lines and
- sets some European standards which can enhance and promote this country’s European future.