

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference in Mostar

Systemic Weaknesses Must Be Addressed

The ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte yesterday highlighted that “nine years after Dayton , the authorities of the RS have not apprehended a single individual indicted by the ICTY.” Carla Del Ponte goes on to say that this “confirms the systemic weaknesses built into the law enforcement and security structures in BiH, and in particular the RS. They must be tackled so that these structures finally help, not hinder, the country in co-operating with the Tribunal. The Ministries of Defence and Interior of the RS cannot, by any reasonable standards, be judged to have helped in this regard.”

Two weeks ahead of the meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels on December 9 and 10, the High Representative today expressed his concern that lack of co-operation by the RS may once again hinder the progress of BiH on the road to NATO and the European Union. The High Representative said today “this lack of cooperation is now the biggest threat to the interests of all BiH citizens. These RS institutions cannot continue to block BiH's path to the European Union and to NATO”. The High Representative underlined that “this is a damning indictment of the structures of the RS, which, despite international and domestic legal obligations, remains in fundamental breach of the Dayton Agreement.”

“During my meetings in the US, with Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, Ambassador-At-Large for War Crimes Issues Pierre Prosper, Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, and then in Brussels, with EU High Representative for

Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, the new head of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, and the EU Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, it was absolutely clear that the RS's failure to arrest a single ICTY indictee is seen as an affront to the values of the institutions that the RS wishes to join," [end of quote] the High Representative said.

The failure of the RS authorities, in particular the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, to co-operate with the ICTY is now the biggest obstacle to BiH's NATO and EU aspirations. These authorities are clearly failing to give the ICTY the information it needs to track down indictees, and have also failed to take any significant action to arrest indictees themselves.