

Time Is Running Out for the RS

Bosnia and Herzegovina's NATO and EU aspirations are being jeopardized by the RS's complete failure to meet its obligations to the ICTY, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, told the UN Security Council today. He said that the lack of ICTY cooperation is now the biggest threat to the entire country's, but most especially the Republika Srpska entity's, prospects.

The High Representative reminded the Security Council that in nine years the RS has not handed over a single PIFWC; it has failed to give the ICTY the information it needs to track down indictees; and it has failed to take any significant action to do this itself.

"That is an affront to justice and an affront to the values of the institutions which RS leaders claim they wish to join," the High Representative said. "They need to be in no doubt that they cannot treat this solemn obligation, which they signed up to at Dayton, as if it were written in invisible ink, when it's there in black and white. And they need to be clear that the International Community, and this Security Council, will not permit them to remain in fundamental breach of a cardinal requirement in Dayton with impunity.

"Nine years is already too long – far too long. Time is running out for the RS to take action to comply with international law. Time is running out for the RS to continue to block BiH's path to the European Union and to NATO. Time is running out for those who think they can abuse the protections offered by Dayton."

The High Representative emphasized that "the time for excuses is over" and that the RS authorities must act decisively so

that BiH can “make that final, crucial break with the past, and embrace a brighter future as a modern European nation.”

That brighter future is already within reach, the High Representative said, because of the impressive progress that has been made in other areas during the last six months

- The process of unifying Mostar is proceeding on track
- The State-level Intelligence Agency is up and running
- SIPA is operational and in its own premises
- The Police Restructuring Commission is making good progress and expected to report by the end of the year
- The first postwar BiH defence minister has been appointed and is serving as co-chair of the Defence Reform Commission
- The State Court is up and running
- BiH is on track to start trying war crimes
- The single HJPC was established on 1 May
- The ITA is up and running
- VAT is on course for introduction in 2006
- Energy sector reform is proceeding (and the entire Southeast Europe electricity grid has just been harmonized, with BiH in a pivotal position)
- The internal debt issue has been resolved
- Legislation enabling direct election of mayors was enacted in time for the successful 2 October elections

The High Representative emphasized, however, that “BiH’s economy is still not growing fast enough to relieve the pain of its suffering people” and he noted that the financial viability of the state in its present shape “may make it necessary to consider before too long the pressing need to make the state’s constitutional structure more functional.”