

Paddy Ashdown and Carla Del Ponte call for BiH Parliament to make War Crimes Chamber operational by January 2005

At a meeting today in the Hague, the High Representative in Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH), Paddy Ashdown, and the ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Carla del Ponte, underlined that there can be no compromise on the long term commitment to the Rule of Law in BiH. "Independent and effective trials at BiH's State Court are an essential element of the Rule of Law reforms in BiH" said the High Representative. Carla Del Ponte added that "BiH has undertaken to ensure the effective processing of war crimes cases through the country's domestic legal system – to fail in this regard would be a very negative signal".

The High Representative and the Chief Prosecutor discussed progress made in establishing the War Crimes Chamber, which will enable BiH to effectively prosecute war crimes through its own judicial system. The Parliament will tomorrow review amendments to the current BiH Law on Courts, Prosecutors Office and the Law on Transfer of War Crimes Cases from the ICTY to the Court of BiH. It was agreed that failure to pass these amendments would severely undermine the fight to hold war criminals accountable.

Carla Del Ponte underlined that "It is essential War Crimes legislation is passed by the Parliament tomorrow, so that BiH can fulfil its January target for commencing with trials of war criminals."