

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

The Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, is speaking this morning at a conference that focuses on reform of local self-governance. The conference has been organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Citizens' Forum Tuzla with the aim of assessing the state of local self-governance in both Entities and identifying steps that need to be taken in order to secure greater participation by citizens in local government. Prof. Mirko Pejanovic, Slavisa Sucur, Brane Jovicic, Ane Wittman and Ljubisa Markovic will be among those taking part in this conference.

Ambassador Hays will emphasise how important it is that mayors articulate the challenges they face and identify the tools they need in order to provide better services to citizens.

This will, among other things, facilitate the harmonization of competencies overlapping between municipalities and the cantons – this overlap has until now been a major cause of the dysfunction that holds back the provision of efficient services to citizens in the Federation.

It's not a question of change for the sake of change – or of bringing things into line with European practice just for conformity's sake.

It's a question of giving mayors the administrative tools they need in order to deliver services to citizens effectively.

Tomorrow, PDHR Hays will be in Tomislavgrad where he will meet the municipal authorities, businesspeople and youth.

He will point out, among other things, that the introduction of direct election of mayors in the Federation offers the political parties an opportunity to draft in some new faces.

The October elections present a remarkably good opportunity for the political parties to introduce a new generation of politicians. BiH politics needs an infusion of youth, energy and new ideas and the parties in the municipalities can take advantage of the extension of direct mayoral elections to the Federation to produce just such an infusion.

A detailed Media Advisory will be issued during the day.