

## **Cantons must not undermine BiH authority**

The High Representative, Lord Ashdown, and the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Beecroft, met yesterday to discuss a way forward on Education Reform, in light of continued obstruction and the resulting recent loss of millions of Dollars in international financial assistance. In particular, they discussed the latest problem to emerge, namely the refusal of Cantons 2, 6, 7 and 8 to bring their Primary and Secondary Education Laws into line with the State-level Framework Law.

This State-level law, which was needed to bring BiH into compliance with its international obligations, was passed with the support of all parties in the State Parliament in June. Since then, all lower levels of government have been obliged to bring their laws into compliance with the State law. This action is also needed to fulfill BiH's post accession requirements for membership of the Council of Europe and therefore for the successful conclusion to the European Union's Feasibility Study. The Brcko District, the Republika Srpska, Cantons 1, 3, 4, 5, and 9 have complied fully. Unfortunately, the Cantonal authorities in Western Herzegovina, Herzegovina-Neretva, Central Bosnia and Posavina have refused to amend their laws, thus bringing themselves into direct conflict with the State of BiH and its international obligations. The parties responsible for this refusal to conform to the State's law are primarily the HDZ, but the SDA and SBiH as well.

Commenting the High Representative said:

"What we are witnessing goes well beyond the issue of education. The blatant disregard of these Cantons for the State Parliament, the BiH Constitution and the principles enshrined in the Dayton Peace Accord represents nothing short of an affront to governance. In any Federal State, conflicts between different levels of government are a cause for concern. Here, such conflicts represent a clear and present danger to the State."

"Those who claim to support the building of the State cannot sit by idly while subordinate levels of government refuse to implement the unanimously expressed will of the State Parliament. If the parties in Cantons 2, 6, 7 and 8 will not act, then I will have to. The constitutional supremacy of the State Parliament must be upheld. Those who challenge this principle must be held accountable."