

Defence Officials Move From Entity To State Level

In response to a request by BiH Prime Minister Adnan Terzic, RS Prime Minister Dragan Mikerevic and FBiH Prime Minister Ahmet Hadzipasic the High Representative Paddy Ashdown yesterday amended BiH's Civil Service Laws allowing Civil Servants to move from Entity to State Ministries.

This is an essential part of the process of giving the new state institutions the resources they need. It is particularly important for the process of defence reform, as it will free up defence officials at the entity level to move to positions at the State level. The new regulations will allow bright young officials who have shown dedication and potential in their entity ministries to move to senior positions at the state level.

In their joint letter to the High Representative the three Prime Ministers say that the "transfer of civil servants from the Entity to the State will be crucial in order to set up the new [BiH] Ministry of Defence and to decrease the over-all cost of government. Furthermore, recruiting experienced staff from Entities will be necessary to implement the reforms quickly".

The High Representative has welcomed the Prime Ministers initiative noting that BiH still suffers from a bloated public administration at too many levels of Government. Expansion of State competencies should therefore go hand in hand with corresponding reductions in the Entity and other bureaucracies, otherwise, the burden on the taxpayers of BiH will only increase.

Quickly establishing key state institutions is a pre-requisite for further Euro-Atlantic integration. NATO has requested that

staffing in BiH's defence institutions should have reached 104 before the Istanbul summit in late June, currently the BiH Ministry of Defence employs fewer than twenty. The transfer of qualified civil servants, already vetted by the respective Civil Service Agency from the Entity to the State bring BiH significantly closer to meeting the reforms set out by NATO in December last year.

Progress is being made on the technical and structural reforms set out by NATO for BiH's PfP membership. However, yesterday the High Representative also expressed concern that some in the RS may choose to use the RS Police action in Visegrad as a means of derailing the most serious attempt yet by the RS authorities to detain those indicted by the ICTY and so ensure the RS meets its international and domestic legal obligations. "An investigation is rightly underway, but it would be terrible if these RS policemen, who were doing their duty, were to be made political scapegoats by those who have long obstructed RS cooperation with the ICTY, and with it BiH's chances of a better future" said the High Representative.

NATO has underlined that full co-operation with the ICTY is a key requirement if BiH wants to be invited to apply for PfP membership this summer.

The decisions are available on the OHR web page at www.ohr.int