

Ashdown Briefs BiH Authorities on EU's Thinking on EUFOR

The High Representative and European Union Special Representative in BiH, Paddy Ashdown, yesterday forwarded to the BiH Presidency the report that EU High Representative Javier Solana presented on 23 February to the EU Foreign Affairs ministers on the possible EU deployment in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The report is based on the premise that if NATO decides to end SFOR's mission in BiH, the EU should be prepared to deploy a force in BiH. The report notes that in providing a force for BiH the EU's principal objective would be to support this country's aspiration to achieve full integration in the EU and NATO.

The Report states that this deployment should be an integral component in a comprehensive approach that brings together the political, economic and security dimensions of the EU's engagement in BiH. The Report also recommends a reinforced co-ordinating role for the EU Special Representative as *primus inter pares* among the heads of the different EU missions in BiH.

This report confirms that any EU force would have a new and distinct mission compared to SFOR. SFOR, when it leaves BiH, will leave a country that is in a very different position from that when NATO first deployed in 1995. Any EU force would have two fundamental objectives. First, to guarantee the secure environment necessary for the core objectives of the OHR's Mission Implementation Plan and the EU's Stabilisation and Association Process and contribute to them. Second, to have a particular focus on the common fight against organised crime. The EU force should therefore assume the military responsibilities of the Dayton Peace Agreement, and be the ultimate guarantor of the High Representative's authority under Dayton. It should be credible and robust, and act under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Recognising that the international community has been most effective in BiH when it has acted together, the closest co-ordination with NATO would be maintained.

Finally, the Report recommends that close EU/BiH consultation on this possible deployment should continue.

"This Report underlines the EU's long-term commitment to BiH, and to integrating BiH into Euro-Atlantic structures" the High Representative and European Union Special Representative said. He added that "BiH's place is a member of the European family of nations, and without this region Europe is not complete."