

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

OHR looks for progress on EU and PfP requirements

The OHR welcomed yesterday the signature of a joint declaration by all the parties represented in the BiH House of Representatives in which they pledge their readiness to find consensus in order to achieve membership of the European Union and NATO's Partnership for Peace.

The OHR looks forward to this agreement being translated into a real political momentum behind the requirements for the EU's Stabilisation and Association Agreement and NATO's Partnership for Peace membership.

A key test will be the passage of BiH's internal security legislation which includes measures to give BiH a state police agency capable of fighting organised crime, and a state intelligence agency, like every other country in Europe.

Yesterday, the BiH Parliamentary Assembly's Committee for Defence and Security Policy forwarded the draft Law on the Intelligence and Security Agency to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly for further consideration, which is encouraging.

The draft they propose contains minor amendments, which will have to be changed, if the Law is to live up to European standards in providing a legal framework creating a modern, effective and democratically accountable agency, but we are positive that the necessary changes will be made.

The OHR is also looking to the Council of Ministers to make serious legislative progress in the SIPA reforms, a package of laws which are to strengthen BiH's capacity to fight serious and organized crime, at their session today.

BiH is the only country in Europe that does not have a state level police agency with responsibility to fight organised crime, and this is one of the reasons that BiH is being used by organised crime as a base and a corridor into Europe.

Prime Minister Terzic has taken the lead by urging his colleagues in the Council of Ministers to agree this Anti-Crime package as soon as possible. We look forward to other ministers in the Council, particularly Mr Mladen Ivanic, also putting aside narrow political interests in the interests of giving this country an organisation capable of protecting the citizens from the mafia.

The other reason why the Council of Ministers, Mr Djerić and his colleagues in the RS, will want to support this Anti-Crime package is that this is also one of the 16 pre-requisites of the EC's feasibility study.

Mr Ivanic will want to ensure that BiH Serb politicians do not become a roadblock on the path to Europe, or deny BiH the institutions it needs to fight back against the organised crime that has been robbing and terrorising the citizens of this country. He has a special responsibility in this regard, both as BiH's foreign minister, and as the leader of Mr Djerić's party.

There has been a lot of misinformation about these reforms. Let me be clear: they will give this country the tools to fight serious and organised crime and terror: in short, this Anti-Crime package is a key test of whether BiH's leaders are prepared to take the national security of this country seriously. It is also a test of BiH's seriousness about reform: reform created by BiH's institutions, passed by BiH's institutions and in line with European requirements.