

# Governing and Opposition parties come together in interests of BiH

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, today welcomed the signature of a joint declaration by all the parties represented in the BiH House of Representatives pledging their readiness to find consensus in order to achieve membership of the European Union and NATO's Partnership for Peace.

"This shows that BiH's political leaders can come together to unite in favour of a brighter, European, future for all the citizens of this country," the High Representative said. "This joint platform, that brings BiH's leading governing and opposition parties together for the first time, gives hope to the millions of BiH citizens who have been longing for their political leaders to set aside narrow party-political differences in the interests of the citizens of BiH as a whole, and a more prosperous future."

"I congratulate Nikola Spiric for initiating this declaration, and I congratulate all the party leaders who have signed it, for their forward-looking and constructive attitude. But as the citizens of BiH know better than anyone else, deeds not words are what matter, and I look forward to a real, renewed, political momentum behind the requirements for the EU's Stabilisation and Association Agreement and NATO's Partnership for Peace membership." He said the first test "will come tomorrow, when the Council of Ministers discusses BiH's Anti-Crime package, including measures to give BiH a state police agency capable of fighting organised crime, like every other country in Europe."

The joint platform was signed by all the governing and opposition parties represented in BiH's Parliament. In the

agreement, the leaders of all the political parties represented in the parliament pledge their readiness to find consensus in order to achieve European Union and Partnership for Peace membership. Deadlines for completing the reforms required for BiH to meet the requirements set for both Partnership for Peace membership and for the European Union to consider launching negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association agreement are set for June this year. BiH must meet these targets if it is to prove it is serious about building a European future.

The High Representative will be meeting Mr. Spiric to congratulate him on this initiative and to learn in practical detail how this joint platform will assist and expedite the passage of reforms through BiH's government and parliament.