

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

PDHR and SDHR in Banja Luka

Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays and Senior Deputy High Representative Werner Wnendt will be in Banja Luka tomorrow where they meet senior RS officials. Today they meet BiH and FBiH officials.

The object of these meetings is to impress upon BiH government and parliamentary leaders the International Community's deep concern that the authorities' continuing failure to implement reforms to which they have committed themselves will destroy any chance of BiH entering Partnership for Peace or beginning Stabilization and Association negotiations with the European Union this year. Failure to honor commitments could also cost BiH hundreds of millions of dollars of loans this year. I've brought along copies of the materials that were distributed at today's meeting. They lay out the facts and figures involved in this process.

The European Union's Feasibility Study identifies 16 steps that the BiH authorities must take in the first half of 2004 if BiH is to have any chance of a positive answer from the EU in the second half of the year on its preparedness to begin formal negotiations for a Stability and Association Agreement.

In order to fulfill requirements in the field of rule of law and security, the authorities must unblock the current deadlock on intelligence reform and the creation of a single HJPC and an expanded and strengthened law-enforcement capacity at the State level.

In regard to requirements for PfP membership, the authorities

need to nominate a Defence Minister or fill eight other senior positions in the Ministry of Defence, the Joint Staff and the Operational Command by the end of the week. A Law on Single state-level intelligence agency under proper democratic control should be adopted by 1 March. The SIPA to become operational by 1 April.

These are some of the requirements for BiH to move forward toward European integration. This morning's meeting was a wake-up call to BiH officials: the window of opportunity is fast closing.