

High Representative Issues Temporary Decision on Mostar

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, on Friday issued a Decision aimed at reassuring the citizens of Mostar that no administrative decisions will be taken that could prejudice or prejudice the implementation of a Mostar settlement on the basis of the Winterstein Report.

This Decision is precautionary and temporary. It prevents the potential misuse of public property and resources to the detriment of Mostar's citizens and the future unified City.

The Decision

- freezes any further land allocation by the City-Municipalities of Mostar South, Mostar South-West, Mostar West, Mostar South-East, Mostar North, and Mostar Stari Grad;
- freezes any further appointments in the existing City administration; and
- freezes any further transfer or conveyance of public property,

until a decision has been taken on Mostar's future. This decision must be taken by the end of January, six months ahead of the October elections.

"I don't need to tell you that the current situation in Mostar is worse than unacceptable," the High Representative told journalists in Mostar on Friday. "It is a running sore that can poison the whole body politic of this country, and has done so in the past. The current arrangements are also failing the citizens of Mostar in a very practical sense. Due to the political situation, citizens are not getting proper schools, hospitals, garbage collection, sports facilities – all the

services that a modern European city should provide.”

The High Representative noted that “the continuing division of Mostar is an obstacle on BiH’s road to Europe,” and he pointed out that a proposed international investment conference in the city, to be chaired by Member of the BiH Presidency Dragan Covic, and the re-opening of the restored Mostar Bridge in July, at which Suleiman Tihic will officiate as Chair of the BiH Presidency, will be rendered incongruous if the basic division of the city is not resolved.

The High Representative said that the report presented to him by the Chairman of the Mostar Commission, Norbert Winterstein is a fair compromise that offers the best way forward. Over the next few weeks, in consultation with all parties, the High Representative will seek to resolve two issues on which the Winterstein Commission failed to reach agreement – the future of the municipalities, and the electoral system. In everything else, he said, the political agreements achieved by the Winterstein Commission will be preserved.

“The core substance of the Commission’s proposal is *not* open to change,” the High representative said. “I will go the last mile, consistent with the principles I have outlined, to create a consensus. And if we cannot reach such a consensus, I will do what has to be done.”