

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

NATO Considers BiH for PfP Membership Today

The Defence Ministers of the NATO Member Countries will meet today in Brussels. One of the items on their agenda will be BiH's prospects for entry into this association of countries that has ensured peace and stability for its members for almost sixty years.

Whilst we will have to await the results of the discussions within NATO and what they will say about BiH's co-operation with the ICTY – another PfP condition – BiH can be proud of a significant achievement.

With the FBiH Parliament's vote yesterday, the state Parliament's adoption of the State level defence reforms earlier this week and the RSNA's vote last week, Bosnia and Herzegovina and its Entities have now completed the process of constitutional and legal amendments which place military command and control at the state level.

These votes have opened the door to BiH's integration into NATO – a process that offers the citizens of this country the best prospects for long-term peace and stability.

NATO's defence ministers will now have concrete evidence when they meet today that BiH is serious about joining PfP and NATO. This matters to every person in this country: membership of PfP and one day NATO offers the citizens of this country the best chance of long-term peace and security.

By passing these laws and constitutional amendments BiH has shown that it can change Dayton, using the provisions of Dayton itself. Powers that were exercised at the entity level have been consolidated to the state-level by political agreement. This should provide encouragement to all those who want to see this country become a functional state on the road

to Europe, working in the interests of all its citizens.

Economic Development Plan

On Tuesday the State and Entity Governments agreed tax reductions to stimulate investment and job growth and a significant expansion of the private sector. They also agreed to offset the social strains that are inevitable when countries go through the difficult process of economic transition, by setting in place measures to reduce poverty.

The coordination Board for Economic Recovery and European Integration – which brings together all the relevant personnel responsible for economic development in the three governments – accepted a four-year economic development program drawn up under the aegis of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan (PRSP) (in local language “Development Strategy for BiH”). The BiH authorities drafted and approved this document without the involvement of the International Community. It is a made-in-BiH product that has the support of the three prime ministers and the three finance ministers.

The High Representative is pleased that this plan has been finalized and he urges the Entity governments and the BiH Council of Ministers formally to approve the document and then to get its main provisions enacted as quickly as possible.

As the High Representative noted in his speech yesterday, getting real change to this country is “not about making declarations, promises and plans” but about implementing those plans and getting the benefits to citizens. He also pointed out that “around half of this country is living at or below the level of official poverty,” and those people have every right to be impatient with promises of better times to come. The plan agreed by the Economic Coordination Board on Tuesday will be all the more effective because it is homegrown – but the governments must now deliver.