

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

High Representative meets NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson

Paddy Ashdown met yesterday evening with NATO Secretary General George Robertson and then later with ambassadors of NATO member countries in Brussels. The High Representative this morning briefed European Union ambassadors in Brussels on the situation in BiH and this afternoon he will be travelling to New York.

At his meeting with Lord Robertson last night the High Representative briefed on the agreement reached by the Defence Reform Commission. He described this as a major success for BiH. The High Representative said that this was the start of a process that offered the best guarantee to the citizens of BiH of long-term peace and stability; that these reforms, now agreed by the Commission, were the first step to making BiH a credible candidate for PfP membership.

The High Representative highlighted that these reforms did what Lord Robertson asked in his letter, establishing state-level command and control over BiH's armed forces. The next step – assuming BiH joins Partnership for Peace, would be to fulfil the conditions necessary for full NATO membership, namely the full integration of BiH's armed forces.

The High Representative underlined that the agreement reached by the Defence Reform Commission showed a new spirit of compromise in BiH's politics. He praised BiH's political leaders for having taken difficult decisions in the interest of all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He told the Secretary General that this was a positive signal for the future, and that he hoped NATO would recognise the significance of these achievements. The High Representative underlined that BiH's entry to PfP depends now on when BiH implements these reforms.

This morning the High Rep briefed EU ambassadors in Brussels on the progress made in BiH. He said that the magnetic pull of Brussels was increasingly replacing the push of the Bonn powers as the locomotive for reform and he said [I quote] "It is manifestly the case that as BiH moves closer to Europe, it must increasingly demonstrate that it is behaving like a country, doing things for itself, and not having them done for it. BiH cannot get to Europe through the Office of the High Representative. I do not rule out the continued use of the Bonn powers, but I always made it clear that I intended to use them more at the start of my mandate, and then use them less and less. That is exactly what is happening. I have issued half as many decisions in the past 8 months as I did in the previous 8 months, and I am confident that that trend will continue. One of the main reasons that I am able to rely on the Bonn powers less, is because I, and BiH, can rely on the European Union more and more."

PDHR Mayors' Conference Speech

Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays is speaking this morning at a mayors' conference in Sarajevo. The object of the conference is to explore ways of improving the services that municipalities deliver to citizens.

Ambassador Hays will point out that [I quote] "Corrupt and inefficient municipalities will undermine every attempt to change Bosnia and Herzegovina. While on the other hand effective and efficient municipalities will *lead* the effort to change this country in a fundamental way." [end quote]

Ambassador Hays will call on municipalities to band together to achieve economies of scale in delivering services, and he will call on municipalities to adopt modern management techniques in order to motivate staff and deliver better service to citizens.