

High Representative Renews Call for Agreement on Mostar Statute

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, on Friday made it clear that although the Commission charged with producing a statute for the city of Mostar has failed to reach agreement on a workable draft, a permanent settlement that protects and advances the interests of all Mostar's citizens must be found. Since municipal elections will be held next year, a solution must be found before the end of 2003.

"For the first time Mostar's elected representatives had an opportunity to forge a modern European administrative system for their citizens," The High Representative said, commenting on the Commission's failure to reach agreement. "The failure of the Commission sends a negative signal about BiH to Europe. The European countries want to see that BiH's elected representatives are capable of resolving their own problems".

The Mostar Commission attempted to convey a session yesterday evening for the last time but there was no quorum. The five remaining members of the original nine, which represented all of BiH's constituent peoples and all the major parties in the City Council, produced a non official paper recording some of the various opinions presented in the Commission, which was tasked with producing a single draft Statute by 31 July 2003. The paper reflects a clear and general recognition that the status quo in the City of Mostar is untenable.

"All sides in Mostar supported this process; sending their representatives and making proposals. Many of the individual members of the Commission made notable contributions, but were let down by the obstruction of the party machines. And while the Commission as a whole has not succeeded, it has provided a foundation upon which we could build" the High Representative noted.

The High Representative thanks those members of the Commission who have worked diligently and thus ensured that the Commission did continue to make progress.

"We will use the summer break to take stock of the situation and determine how to move forward," the High Representative said. "The fact that we will have municipal elections next year means that the Mostar Statute must be resolved by the end of this year. I share the impatience of Mostarians, who want to see this issue resolved and the city and the services they pay taxes for become more normal."