

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

Trebinje

A short while ago a meeting between the Mayors of the Municipalities in Eastern Herzegovina and the Heads of the International Community Offices in the region began. They are looking at ways that the International Community could assist with the domestic institutions in tangibly improving the situation for all those in the region.

In a half of hour the newly appointed IC Coordinator for Eastern Herzegovina, Anatoly Viktorov, with local authority representatives, will address representatives of the media.

I want to use this opportunity to remind you of a letter sent yesterday by the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, to the Mayors of Eastern Herzegovina.

In his letter the High Representative describes his experiences during visits to the region at the beginning of May, highlighting that in all his contacts with the people of the region it was clear "that there are several issues that if properly addressed by the local authorities, with the assistance of the International Community, could make a tangible difference to everyday lives."

There is agreement across the International Community on a number of steps that the IC together with the authorities in the region to make a marked improvement in Eastern Herzegovina. In his letter the High Representative highlights; improving cross-border co-operation between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia, improving the municipal administrations and helping the Municipal Mayors

open up the region to economic development as the IC's top priorities.

The High Representative urges the Municipal Mayors "to intensify your efforts in economic reform, the rule of law, implementation of property laws, judicial reforms and the fight against our common enemy, corruption and organized crime." He adds that "We must ensure that Eastern Herzegovina doesn't lag behind the rest of BiH as we move towards Europe. We owe this to the people of Eastern Herzegovina."

OHR Welcomes the Foundation of the FBiH Financial Investigations Group

The OHR's Senior Deputy High Representative and Head of the Rule of Law Pillar, Ambassador Bernard Fassier, today wrote to the heads of the FBiH Customs Administration, the FBiH Tax Administration, the FBiH Financial Police, the FBiH Police and FOSS welcoming their initiative to co-ordinate their efforts more closely. "Domestic initiatives such as this are a welcome indication that the crime-fighting institutions in BiH are determined to do their job" said Ambassador Fassier in his letter, adding "the High Representative and the OHR have long highlighted that the nature of crime in BiH is changing and new measures and initiatives are required to ensure that it is tackled effectively".

"An essential tool in the struggle against crime is the new FBiH Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code that, I'm very pleased to note, were passed by the FBiH Parliament yesterday". "The decisiveness shown by the FBiH institutions, together with a modern legal framework, will, I'm sure, provide tangible results in the fight against crime" said Ambassador Fassier in his letter. Ambassador Fassier concludes that he looked forward to similar domestic initiatives "advancing co-operation between State level structures and across BiH's Entities".