

Transcript of TV Hayat Korak featuring High Representative

Date: 05 June 2003 Transcript: BORAN	
Intro (Feature)	If the party leaders which should establish a government in HNK – the SDA and the HDZ – haven't submitted to the OHR lists of ministers of the new cantonal government by Wednesday 12.00, the High Representative will take severe measures in Mostar. This deadline is until Wednesday noon when OHR should have received a list supported by the parties proposing them. I will not say what I will do but I will certainly be forced to make the lives of these parties and their leaders difficult. Let me remind you that the HNK is the only canton which since the October elections hasn't had a government in accordance with the election results. The leading parties could not agree on the number of ministerial positions to be given to which people, after the special regime status which ensured a 50:50 ratio of power among Bosniaks and Croats, was abolished. Ashdown, obviously angry and tired, gave an ultimatum to the parties after he visited today, at 30C, members of the centres for old and retired people and children with special needs, saying it was a scandal and he emphasised that the budgetary users have jobs but are not paid, that the politicians are paid but are not doing their job. Ashdown emphasised that nearly 3 million KM was spent on bureaucracy in the 8 months without a government in HNK and that money could have gone to the beneficiaries such as old people and children.

Rondic. We have seen the story from Mostar, we heard what you said at the press conference, maybe it would be good to explain to our listeners clearly what is the problem with Mostar and the establishment of the government in Canton 7 and how to solve it.	In simple terms, the elections took place 8 months ago and the governments were formed at all other levels in BiH except in Canton 7. Nothing happened. The consequences of this are disgraceful, and I think that the politicians should act in accordance with the results from the ballot boxes. They should serve the citizens of BH and every citizen in that canton should be clear that their politicians receive salaries for doing nothing. Today I visited a centre for handicapped persons, and the people there are doing a fantastic job but they don't have funds. They received some funds from the Spanish government but until the government is formed in this canton, these people cannot do things for one of most vulnerable categories of society. I visited a classroom which was empty. 20 young people should have been in that classroom getting an education for the future, but they were at home instead, somewhere between Mostar and Jablanica, because the government cannot be formed. I also visited an old people's home. It is necessary to pass laws which will protect those categories, but those laws don't exist. So we have politicians who are paid for not doing their job, and public servants who should help those people are not doing their job. Huge amounts of tax payers money are wasted. I am reluctant to interfere in the democratic process. I said I would follow the situation with concern and will monitor the situation in which the citizens suffer. What would make me intervene would be if the interests of the citizens of Canton 7 were fundamentally damaged by those who have shown they lack the responsibility to establish a government. Every citizen of BiH is damaged and endangered, since BiH qualified for developing the Feasibility Study for accession to the European Union, because the EU wants to see that we are able to form governments efficiently and if they look at BiH today, they will ask themselves What is this? 8 months after elections, instead of forming a government, these politicians simply stand there, spend tax payers money and do nothing. These are simple facts. If we cannot establish efficient government ourselves in this country, than we don't stand a chance of getting closer to Europe. That is why I was forced today to say – enough, form the government. I will not get involved in it and investigate whose fault it is. That is not my job. I will not get involved in the establishment of a government but if a government is not formed in a normal period of time and if the citizens are not provided with appropriate services and if the wishes of citizens expressed at the elections are not fulfilled, I must, by the deadline I have given, consider what actions to take in order to protect individual citizens of Canton 7 who are not being served by their government, and to protect the road towards Europe.
Question for viewers– how to assess the work of the High Representative – Tele-voting	

Rondic. You were pretty harsh today Mr Ashdown and gave a deadline which is Wednesday noon, otherwise you said you would make the lives of party leaders and the parties responsible for it, SDA and HDZ difficult. You are not usually so harsh, what is the reason for it today. Was it just the Mostar sun and heat or enough is enough in this city on the Neretva?	In the eight months since the elections, a huge amount of tax payers' money has been spent, wasted. You are not aware of it, but for some time I have been involved in trying to stop this. I met with Tihic and Colak on Monday. I clearly stated what I intended to do. I wouldn't want to go too much in public with those issues but I will say this, if nothing happens by Wednesday noon, I will have to do something. Before that, on many occasions, my colleague Enver Schrömbgens has appealed to the parties to fulfil its democratic obligations. So it has to come to a point when persuasion stops and we start with stronger measures. And the reason why I use it now is not only that the citizens of Canton 7 are damaged but also because the future of this country and its road to Europe is damaged. If they cannot fulfil this objective by persuasion, I will unfortunately have to take rather strong actions in order to protect the citizens of Canton 7 and of the whole of BiH. This should be done by BiH politicians and not me and the fact itself that I have to give such a warning damages the reputation of BiH as we approach the decision on Europe. I wish I didn't have to do it but I don't have other alternative. Some are of view that I should have done it earlier but I think that it is important to give to the politicians as much time and space as possible to try to do it themselves. I am sorry that they failed in doing so and in fulfilling their democratic responsibility and regret that they forced me to act in order to protect the citizens. Particularly if I may say, the most vulnerable categories of our society are those young people I saw today, they have magnificent commitment of their teachers who haven't been paid for 5 or 6 months. The old people I saw today really deserve a better life and they are being deprived of it because of politicians who argue with each other and maintain parallel structures that should have been abolished 8 months ago. BiH must understand that if we want to advance towards Europe, we must carry on like this.
Rondic. We thought it would be interesting to hear the comments of SDA and HDZ leaders after your press conference. Let hear the statements given by Messrs Tihic and Colak.	Tihic. This time I have to say that the High Rep is mostly right. It is difficult to understand that 8 months after the election the government of HNK is not formed and naturally, objective responsibility should be borne by two largest political parties SDA and HDZ. In my opinion, cantonal boards of both parties didn't show enough political wiseness and understanding for addressing this issue and the party headquarters expected them to solve the problems. What is this all about? In central Bosnia canton, which has similar solution as HNK, SDA agreed to give the 9th position which belongs to a Serb candidate to the HDZ with the approval of the SDA prime minister. They found a name acceptable to both SDA and HDZ. Unfortunately, in HNK they don't accept that SDA proposes this member. They also could not agree on the Serb candidate that both parties would accept. It is the 9th position that ensures majority in the canton government. It is highly likely that the party presidency will hold a special session and make appropriate decision and changes and dismissals in order to meet the request of the High Representative.
Rondic. Do you have any comments to the announcement of possible sanctions by the High Representative for the leaders of the parties and parties themselves?	Tihic: That is the position of the High Representative and his assessment of the responsibility of parties and individuals at all levels of the parties.

	CoLak; Regarding forming government or unfortunately the non-forming of the government in HNK, I can say that I am disappointed and unhappy about it and that I would do everything in my power to, in the next few days, we establish the government. But I must say that I have so far always been working in that direction because I really want this government to be established as soon as possible. What is not possible, regardless of who is advocating it, it is not possible to have a special regime canton. We have constitutional changes which are adopted and verified and we all have to act in accordance with the constitutional solutions regardless of whether those solutions are acceptable to some or not. We have to be legalists and implement the Constitution as it is. In respect to that, we have to fulfil Constitutional obligations and establish a government which primarily must be based on the 1991 census, which is very clear. According to that census, the government should be formed consisting of the following representatives: 4 Croats, 3 Bosniaks, 1 Serb and 1 representative of others. As far as the election results are concerned, it means that every party can participate in the government depending on the majority. I can only say that it is a source of regret that we didn't establish the government yet. Although we had discussions until late last night, which continued today, I hope that we will make all the necessary efforts to, in the next period, form the government because we ran out of time long ago. I can only say before the High Representative decides to take action in case we don't form the government quickly, I expect determination from all concerned to form a government, based on the Constitution and election results. This is the only way for forming the government and we should look forward to the future with optimism and forget everything that is behind us.
Rondic. We heard statements from leaders of the HDZ and SDA that they in principle agree with you. They seem to agree on this issue and it is obvious that the problems will be solved by Wednesday noon. Why do you always have to "raise your voice" and somehow threaten people, or maybe question positions of individuals in this country in order to get things, which were not done in 7 or 8 months, done in a few days in such an important and sensitive part of BiH?	Ashdown. It is a good question and I will reply to it. First of all, I would like to say that I welcome the constructive tone of these statements. When I first arrived in this country I said I was interested in actions and not in words and indeed I want to emphasise that these are good words, now I am waiting for the appropriate actions. One thing that Mr Tihic said and I think that it was important and interesting, Mr Tihic said that maybe it will be necessary to replace people in the SDA who are obstructing the process. I hope that Mr Colak agrees with it too, it would really be welcome that the persons responsible for obstruction in this country are removed by the party structures and not by the High Representative and I think that it would represent a huge step forward in accepting political responsibility for certain actions. I think it was very interesting what Mr Tihic said. Sometimes, and you have to be fair about it, we have to shout in public and that is all you hear but more and more we are addressing issues behind the scenes, often through a dialogue which you don't know about but it is really sad that in this case, regardless of constant previous warnings, we had to come to this situation. I regret that and it seems that President Tihic and Mr Colak regret it too. But now we will see what will happen. I do have one thing to say, and that is when I set a deadline, I stick to it.

Rondic. It seems from what we heard that the persons responsible for this situation will probably also stick to the deadline that you set. I promised to the listeners that we would discuss several issues, important for BiH and its citizens. This show is made after your first year here. I know you heard this questions hundreds of times but I have to ask you again. Indeed, where is Bosnia and Herzegovina right now? First we had the first stage of the Bulldozer Committee where the set of 50 laws was adopted, yesterday we signed a protocol according to which we commit ourselves, as a country, to continue doing so but when will the ordinary citizens of this country start feeling the impact and concrete benefits of what has been worked on in a speedy way in the last few months?	Ashdown. Glad that you asked, there are some significant successes and some failures too. I am worried somehow by the functionality of the country, that is something that government has to solve, maybe they are working on it. As far as the Bulldozer Committee is concerned, and let me remind you, it wasn't the International Community it was the businesspeople of BiH who, together with the governments, worked on 50 reforms in slightly more than 150 days. That is a huge achievement. I think we can show that it is something that this country can achieve. If the deadline of the 1st July is met for merging the customs administrations into a single state level customs administration and if VAT is introduced on schedule, that will represent a significant achievement. A lot has been done but there is much more to be done. You asked where BiH stands now? I think BiH is coming out of a post-conflict period and entering a pre-transition era. I always tell citizens that the worst times are behind us, what is ahead of us are issues we know about and we need to dedicate ourselves to them. Hungary, Poland and other countries have been through this in the past. What will happen is entirely in the hands of the politicians and the citizens of BiH. Do I think it is possible? Yes, but I have to seriously warn your listeners not to expect to see the results tomorrow. It took Hungary 7 years to go through the same process, but we have to move faster and I am sure we can make it. The beginning of the process is painful. If we privatise some of our companies, which we have to do, than the problems in this country such as unemployment will not suddenly reduce but will suddenly increase. Then we have the Law on Bankruptcy, looking from a short-term aspect, there will be difficulties but one thing should be perfectly clear, if we don't do it, if we don't make difficult decisions then the circumstances will be far, far worse. What keeps me awake at night is the economic situation in BiH. I don't think that BiH will go back to conflict. However, I cannot say what will happen if we don't turn the economy, which has until now depended on foreign assistance, into an export based economy. If we want to avoid a crisis, which will come in few years, then we must make difficult decisions now. I am afraid that my message to the people now is difficult: Don't expect results now, the results will come in a year or two but don't expect them now. We really have to go through difficult times before we start with good times. It happened in Hungary whose economy, when they started the whole process was in a much worse state than is ours now. And now, 7 years after we started it, we can do it in a faster way. Hungary currently has the fastest growing economy in Europe and they are about to join the EU and that is the road we need to take.
--	---

Rondic: We will certainly discuss the economy and the questions we received from our viewers. You said that the future of this country lies with politicians and citizens of this country. I thought it would be natural to ask a few questions about the current and the former Chairmen of the Council of Ministers, Messrs Terzic and Lagumdžija. We asked 4 identical questions which also concern the organisation you are representing.	Terzic: In theory it seems that in BiH we have politicians from all ethnic groups who are prepared to undertake the responsibility, we have the Office of the High Representative which provides an advisory service to the state institutions, introduces certain democratic and European standards. Lagumdžija: Partnership represents a relationship between two equal parties. It represents a relationship between the institutions and representatives of the International Community and domestic political forces on an equal basis. Terzic. It is certain that partnership was more talked about than actual. I am convinced that the Alliance did not have a partnership with the OHR, at least not a partnership which would be good for BiH, for the functioning of its government and for BiH citizens. They had a personal relationship with the High Representative, with the whole institution of the OHR and I must admit that that personal relationship was maintained and that is why we are facing certain problems. Those problems come from less senior staff members in the OHR and we should talk about them in an open manner. The relationship which was created in those 2 years is still strong because any activity we initiate on certain changes get automatically a negative connotation from the OHR. I don't think it is because of the (lets call it) first-level staff in OHR, the High Representative and his deputies and their responsibility, but it is certain that there are still many people in the OHR who maintain the link and work much more with the representatives of the opposition than with us who represent the government. Lagumdžija. We had a lot of ups and downs in our relations. It was the time when we had some kind of misunderstandings between the representatives of the international community and local authorities, but which were good for both the IC and local authorities because those misunderstandings and conflicts resulted in new quality for BiH. Let me remind you, 2 years ago we had a conflict on the 3rd licence as some called it, which resulted not in a victory for local institutions, but in a joint victory of all of us who started slowly to transfer the whole sector of managing the changes to local institutions. Terzic. I feel as a true partner to the International Community, not maybe as operative as I would like to be. When I talk about being a partner to the International Community, I suppose that our relationship is a relationship between people who are interested in BiH's adoption of all the necessary reforms, to make a significant step forward on the European road, to reduce criminality and corruption in BiH and all other elements which are of mutual interest. There are certain things, which make me consider myself as partner of the International Community, and I am personally very satisfied with that. I don't consider myself as a partner of the International Community in terms of a solution to the Mostar City issue and some other local problems we have. Lagumdžija. Well all right, I'll try to be serious. First, this is not a partnership any more. The High Representative runs the country using local political forces as curtains or as small Potemkin villages to plant the little gardens of prosperity under his supervision. And then, as a result of such an agricultural catastrophe, we have local politicians planting the little gardens of prosperity using imported shovels under the supervision of the International Community. I am afraid that today, after 100 days of the governing coalition of the national parties and their satellites, we can conclude that instead of reforms we have a shadow of reforms, new initiatives, new pictures on the miners with helmets and in the suits, but I don't accuse the International Community. They do what we allow them to do. I can only tell you one thing, they could not do that to me. Terzic. 2009 is an objective deadline and the only thing I don't expect is a discussion about whether it is 2009 or 2011, 12, 13. Let's talk about content and the way we are going to realise what is necessary to be done and that is the introduction of European standards in every part of society, not only to drop ourselves into Europe, but because we need it, because my 10-year old kid needs it, and I want to leave him that as a fortune and not just some materialistic things. Lagumdžija. Unfortunately, the Council of Ministers had not so far proposed any laws which the current Parliament adopted. Instead of that we have a High Representative who in between the work on Bulldozer and gardens, must also make and impose laws. I hope this will soon become part of our past.
---	--

Rondic. We have heard a lot of it. I can see you have been making notes carefully; I believe you will have comments on what Terzic and Lagumdžija as representatives of the actual authorities and opposition said.	Ashdown. I have a rule that I don't comment on other people's comments. They have their opinions, I have my job to do, I judge people by their actions, I think it is fair to recognise several things that this government has accomplished and that is some reforms. Should the reforms be implemented faster? I am famous for being impatient. I believe in partnership, however, partnership should not and must not be used as a justification for not doing things. There is one thing that this country doesn't have and that is time. We have to move forward faster and I think that there is a will of the government to implement reforms, but sometimes I wonder whether there are institutional mechanisms necessary for implementation. I sincerely hope that they will soon be established. The partnership that I am interested in is the partnership between the citizens of this country and their politicians and I really regret to hear what Mr Lagumdžija said, and I understand his bitterness because he lost at the elections, I myself lost at elections and it is normal, but it is really sad to see that Mr Lagumdžija doesn't understand that the partnership within the Bulldozer Committee was not a partnership with the International Community but a partnership between the businesspeople of this country and the government. I saw it myself. This is the first partnership between the citizens of BiH, in this case the businesspeople, and their government in implementing reforms and I really think that if one party or a party leader wants to appeal to a wider electorate and to obtain wider electoral support than the one he currently has, he should understand and be pleased about the beginning of a new partnership between the citizens of this country and their politicians, where the High Representative doesn't have a role at all. I could criticise many parties but that is not my job. I don't have favourites but I certainly say that for everything that was done in this country, the International Community never had less share in the success of anything than in the Bulldozer Committee. This is very important. It is the businesspeople of this country that achieved those 50 reforms and they, together with the governments, deserve all the credit for it, more credit than they got in previous statements. I am sorry that it is like this.
Rondic. We are receiving questions from viewers concerning what we have just talked about. We received an interesting question. Especially interesting is the second part of it and the question is: Do you believe that the current structure of politicians, whether the ones in current government or in the opposition, can do something for this country. How to introduce new people in BiH's politics and what can you do about it.	Ashdown. The second part of that question is really fascinating. I serve this country. I don't participate in democratic processes and I prefer not to interfere in that process unless I absolutely have to. As in the example of canton 7. I work together with the government elected by the people of this country. I am a democrat and this country is a democracy. I don't have favourites, i don't prefer one politician to another. I don't judge people by labels, whether it be the SDA, the SDP, or the HDZ. I judge them by their actions and that is what matters to me. Whether this government will be able to do something, let the people be the judge of that. They have achieved something and their achievement should be recognised. I think they should increase the functional capacity which is necessary in BiH. I only judge by their actions, and achievements. Words are not important to me as much as actions. The second part of the question is really, really important. I look at the top nomenclature in BiH and compare the names now to the names from 5, 6 years ago or 10 years ago. And there are the same names. I look at the young people of BiH, whom I try to see to as much as possible. They are talented young people and they don't look to the past but to the future. I think it is worrying that so many young people have not broken through yet to the top in politics. And I think that there is a significant difference between politics in BiH and in Hungary for example and more and more in politics in Serbia and Montenegro where the people are more and more ready to make way for young people in this country. If the international community can assist in this process, fine, but I would still like to appeal to the leaders in BiH, party leaders to give the opportunity to young people in parties, in government, in the civil service, because that is where the future of this country lies. I must say that if the future were in the hands of some talented young people I have spoken with, who look at the future, I would say that the future would be much safer than it would otherwise be.

Rondic. A majority of the questions received from viewers are related to the economic situation in BiH. We would like to talk to you about it. Let's first see and listen to what we have prepared in discussion with successful economists in this country on this issue and about the role of the IC which you represent in this most important sector.	Since his first address to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, Paddy Ashdown has given the impression of a man who knows what he wants. Ever since, the word reform has been the most used in this region. The High Representative has in a year, adopted a large number of decisions. More than 30 of these have been in the area of the economy. A majority, however, agrees that most credit should be given to him for the fight against corruption and crime. There is also the Bulldozer Committee, a body consisting of respectable businesspeople which aims, through dialogue and reform, to improve the business environment in this country. Domazet. In my opinion, Paddy Ashdown strongly initiated the activities on the establishment of the single economic space in BiH, the establishment of VAT, customs revenues at state level, improvement of the business environment. These initiatives really deserve attention. Stojanov. I think and fear that BiH citizens are still not sure about BiH's perspective and that is probably the biggest and the most difficult task faced by Mr Ashdown which he should work on as fast as possible and to convince us that this country exists, that it is functional, that there are no dilemmas about it and that it will become a member of the EU no matter whether it is 2009, 2010 or 2015 but that people here are certain about something. Hadziahmetovic. Although those who know him and his involvement well, understand that he is sometimes ahead of others, and that he does two steps more than others, there is maybe too much of relying on reform forces which many citizens of BiH do not really recognise as reform ones. It is very ungrateful to criticise the High Representative. Although some people maybe think and say differently, judging the work of the High Representative is always with some reserve and some fear for one's own future because the High Representative is High. To be true, Paddy Ashdown never dismissed anybody who didn't share his view. Hadziahmetovic. If there were any failures or maybe mistakes, they could be justified by the time which can be understood but bearing in mind... Stojanov. (Reception problems caused a break.) I think it could be introduced earlier than the two years he talks about. Of course that requires determination, courage and necessary interventions for removing all those who represent an obstacle for implementation of good measures of economic development policy. Domazet. To have our own place in the world, it is important that we are a stable environment, suitable for business. Without the High Representative, we would not be able to achieve this because firstly, our basic problem is that we don't have a consensus on a development vision either economic or social, and secondly because we don't have strong state institutions which would support economic development. Unlike his predecessors, Paddy Ashdown is dealing with diplomacy "in the gloves". His work is much more elastic and more appropriate for BiH's circumstances. Ashdown should probably be grateful to his team of associates. If you are to assess and give marks from 1 to 5 for his work, what would you give him? Stojanov. It is too serious a question to treat as a joke, but if we can allow such a joke, I would say: in the area of the fight against crime and corruption, I would give him 4, but in the area of economy, I would give him something between 2 and 3. Hadziahmetovic: Although I am a very strict professor, I would give him a very good mark, either 4+ or 5-. Domazet: I believe that the mark would have been much better if the environment he worked in was an environment of a better partnership. I would give him something between 3.5 and 4.
---	--

Rondic. We heard our economic experts, we heard their marks, you don't have to comment on them, and especially because we are talking about strict professors especially Professor Hadziahmetovic, though she gave you the highest marks. What is noteworthy in what we have heard on the economic situation and which concerns ordinary citizens of this country, is some kind of impatience among people after many years of patience and expectation for a better situation. How to deal with this impatience?	Ashdown. I don't think you should. I think this country needs more patience. If I have one worry, particularly in the economic situation, it is that people are not impatient enough. It is the apathy that I am concerned about. I like to see patience, I am an incredibly impatient man myself and I would like to see much faster progress in all areas, maybe more than a partnership could provide. Let me just say something about the three comments we have just heard. Those three comments are very well intended, not because they come from people who are not in government now but from people who were the government and who lost at the elections. I think it is incredibly good that they can say something that good and positive about the future of this country. If I may comment on just two issues. Mr Stojanov. First is the state. It takes time to build a country, especially a country which went through such a terrible trauma like this one and which was destroyed. It is a process and not just one event. Could I pass a law which will make every Croat in Herzegovina love BiH? No. Could I pass a law which will make every Serb in RS love BiH? No. Could I work with my partners in BiH in building authorities which will serve citizens well, which will ensure education, a health system, the rule of law, jobs? Yes, that we can do. And if the state serves its citizens well, then the citizens start to trust their country and start to love it. It is a process and not just one event. However, we need to start moving faster on that road. As far as VAT is concerned, if I could make it shorter than 2 years believe me, the experts are telling me that it requires 5 years, I push them for a much faster completion. They tell me it is a complex thing to do. I agree with the comments I heard. We must be very impatient, and accept the risk and I think that the essential issue in economic reform is the rule of law, something we should have started 2 years ago. We are late in that process and if we are not careful, other Balkan countries will leave us behind, therefore we have to move forward very, very fast. As I said before, I must be very truthful to the people of this country. In the short-term, it will be very painful for everybody, however it is necessary in order to have better long-term prospects.
Rondic. A question from young people mostly related to the quality of education and verifying their diplomas abroad, to their contribution to the development of the country.	Ashdown. I spoke earlier about apathy, about lack of anger, lack of patience. We need patience. I don't understand why young people don't demonstrate because of it i.e on the streets because of those facts. If you were abroad and you graduated from the best faculties . . . I met with many BiH students who were the best students at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and if they wished to return to this country, a degree obtained from universities in Oxford, Cambridge, Bologna, Yale is not recognised and if somebody is to be recognised in this country, if a degree is to be recognised, they have to graduate from something else. Do we have the best universities in the world? Far from it. Can you imagine a better law which could persuade our young people to stay in the UK, France, the Netherlands or anywhere and it is interesting to notice that in Serbia, they are moving very fast, their young people return and get involved in their country. This is not the case in BiH and it has to improve. One of the reasons for it is education. I am involved in this issue. One of the measures will be removing ridiculous barriers which prevent the return of our young people to this country. I believe that this is about preservation of jobs by some persons who feel endangered by the return of those young people. It is a scandal and certainly has to be corrected.

Rondic. An interesting email. In his first few speeches Mr Ashdown talked about the health system. Now he is being quiet about it. When will Mr Ashdown do something more about integrating a senselessly divided BiH health system whose segmentation was “verified” by the Dayton agreement. Also a question whether the SARS virus can be stopped at Holbrook’s line?	Ashdown. Very, very, very good question. And a question which we must address. It is a nonsense that in FBiH we have 11 ministers of health, 11 ministers of education and 13 prime ministers. It is a fact and it is not a fact that I can solve – the BiH Constitution belongs to the people of this country and I cannot change it. My powers are limited by the Dayton Agreement but I must say that such a small and poor country as BiH has more government than the powerful USA. We spend 70% of taxes and revenue on politicians, on bureaucrats and only 30% on citizens. In most countries it is the other way around. This is a monstrous thing that our government swallows up so much money so that we cannot pay our teachers, pensioners, health insurance or cover costs of appropriate health care in hospitals. We spend 9% on the armed forces – that is more than the US, we spend 9% of GDP on health but it is not good because the health sector is fragmented. Those are the issues that I cannot solve but those issues should not be avoided. They must be addressed. How to reduce the costs of government is an economic question. If you cannot invest public money in jobs because you spend so much money on politicians, you will always remain poor. I cannot solve this issue, only the citizens of this country can and it is a problem that needs to be addressed now if we are to succeed as a country.
Rondic. A question from Central Bosnia. Why aren’t we dealing with the criminals who misused the positions they had for their own interests. Anywhere in the world it is a simple thing to do: let the persons concerned show what they had 10 years ago and prove how they obtained their current property.	Ashdown. Absolutely. I met many criminals myself. I met today with an expert whom we brought in from a country that does it the best. He is an expert in confiscating criminal assets. This expert is from Ireland. He talked to me about how we make the conditions that are already in our law real. He said to me “You can’t”. In BiH we must do something but it is not possible before we implement a substantial reform of laws. Before you introduce a proper tax system in this country, this cannot be done. This is one of the key aspects of the next stage of the Rule of Law reform – the establishment of legal mechanisms which will ensure that those who have money and are wealthy through criminal activities, risk getting into a situation where their assets are confiscated and I hope that this will happen in the near future. I hope that somebody will ask “How did you get this Audi A8 or this mansion. If you cannot prove how, then the assets will be confiscated”. We really must abolish the power that criminals have over this country. We have worked during the last few months on instruments which will enable that. A new instrument would be the confiscation of the assets through my institution, then a visa ban for EU countries. Indeed, we are creating a coordinated system to fight against this, and in the next few months or in a year, we will start using those instruments to break up criminal networks in this country so that this country is freed from the stigma which has prevented its prosperity for a long time.
Rondic. Several spectators asked about your opinion, as a representative of the IC, on the signing of the USA-BiH Agreement on non-extradition of US citizens to ICTY. What BiH gains, and what it loses.	Ashdown. I am an international civil servant. I may have an opinion about this issue but I don’t have the luxury of expressing it. My responsibilities are within the borders of BiH and God only knows that it is a huge amount of work already without getting involved in other issues. People ask me about my opinion on war in Iraq and I tell them that it is not a part of my responsibilities. I am a civil servant to the International Community and to the citizens of BiH. Believe me, just concentrating on the issues inside the borders of BiH is difficult enough. It is really an issue for the governments of BiH and the USA. It is not a part of my responsibilities, I really have enough things to do by concentrating on my responsibilities.

Rondic. Question on so-called "black list" with 150 names. As far as we are informed, the OHR supported this list.	Ashdown: This is part of my responsibilities. As I already said to you, when I arrived here a year ago, I said I wanted to conduct a coordinated fight against organised crime. There are 3 enemies: terrorism, war crimes and those who support them and organised crime. We now have a coalition of 5 forces who coordinate their work in the fight against those enemies. What you see now is only the beginning of that fight, 150 names are a part of that coordinated approach, those five forces are the institutions of BiH which we strengthen, reform of judges, special state court, then US government which can use visa bans and assets freezes, the OHR that can use assets freezes, the European Union which can use visa bans and finally SFOR. What you see now is coordinated work of all these forces determined to break up criminal networks in this country. It is a part of my responsibilities and I welcome what the USA has done. Each of us will use our weapons in a different way but with one objective and that is to face the three enemies which have held this country hostage for a long time. A warning to criminals, a warning to those who support war crimes, if you thought your life was tough, it is about to become much tougher.
Rondic. Would you support Bosnian version of "Action SABLJA"	Ashdown: It is not my business.
Rondic. Would you support such a decision by BiH government?	Ashdown. The question of BiH's international relations with other countries and above all questions of law are something for the courts and not the High Representative. You ask me whether I support this party or that party in the BiH Court where somebody was charged for a criminal action. I will give the same answer. Courts are designed to work without external interventions, without political interventions or interventions of the High Representative.
Rondic. Do you trust that the Entity PMs will sanction in a proper way the malversation in all three Elektroprivreda.	Ashdown. I believe actions not words. Let me say and I think it is rightfully said that the measures taken in Elektroprivreda Mostar have been strong and efficient and deserve credit. I think the actions taken in Elektroprivreda Sarajevo could be described in the same way. I must say that the reactions of the RS government related to the horrid appalling theft from RS citizens, in Elektroprivreda Trebinje is really disappointing. And my worry is that if it isn't done in a proper way it could endanger the Power III project, which is for the whole of BiH. My colleague and friend Don Hays had to make it really clear to the RS government that this issue must be solved and I am pleased to say that I can tell you that in the last several days there are indicators that they have understood the importance of this issue and that the right actions are being taken although they should have been taken a long time ago.
Rondic. RS citizens who still live abroad because they haven't repossessed property. Regardless of the increased level of property repossession in the whole of BiH, they ask whether certain things could be done so that they can return to their homes.	Ashdown. Increasingly when I speak to returnees, what they say to me that it is no longer a matter of security but the economy. There are no jobs. If I return to Drvar, Bugojno, Srebrenica, increasingly it is a social issue. There are no schools for my children. I can't get my pension from the Federation paid in the RS. What I would like to say is that security is important for the increased number of returns but more and more it is the economic issue and issue of the rule of law, justice and jobs. Here is an example: I have become quite worried recently about the situation in Trebinje and in the last 2 or 3 weeks I have had meetings with my colleagues from the International Community and we are trying to have an international coordinated plan to assist this area in Trebinje. One of the major issues in that area is the lack of returns but when we looked at it, the reason for it was the lack of economic activities, lack of economic chances for the future, lack of jobs. You put that right and it will be easier for refugees to return.

Rondic. We heard the opinions of politicians and economists but what is also important is the opinion of ordinary citizens of BiH on what you have done in the past year. The survey was done in Sarajevo. Lets see what they think.	I believe he has done a lot but he could do things better. It all depends on us as well. Maybe we also do things that should have been done in a better way and we are not doing it. I think that the BiH government has also done enough in the area of rule of law but in the area of economy it seems that nobody did anything. He didn't do anything special. The first thing that he should have done is to break up crime. The whole of BiH is based on pure crime and the main culprits are those on top. This crisis could be solved in a fast and simple way if the money that was stolen is given back to the workers and pensioners. That would change and improve the whole situation. I think that he has done much more than his predecessor Mr Petritsch. If he continues with reforms, I think that he will succeed in full. It is a pity he wasn't here before. With all these committees I trust him completely. It is a pity that those in power have put us into such a lethargy. I like what he did in the area of economy and returns. Why are we like this? One man can't solve everything suddenly. If our people who are responsible for it accept it and try to do something to assist BiH and its people, then probably they came to maybe help us, then they should help us. It is us who should create our own future and the most important thing is that the young people get jobs. He could have done much better. Politicians are still in positions, there are still poor people, and there are beggars in the streets.
Rondic. We heard the voice of the people	Ashdown. Very interesting. Just three messages to pick up. Jobs and justice, clear the crime, give us jobs. They are their priorities and my priorities. It will indeed take time to see the results and I am much encouraged by the priorities and the fact that the priorities that we have are also the priorities of people in this country. Secondly, and I can't underline this enough, you will not get to Europe with the High Representative. Two of your citizens, listeners said something which I always say to BIH politicians. It depends on you, not me. This is something you have to do yourself. Let me tell you, I think that the early stage of what the IC has been doing here is to take a wounded person and provide him with a stick and a crutch and help him stand up. Now this country is standing on its feet and we should not be a crutch, we should help this country. If this country is to move towards prosperity and I think that it is possible, otherwise I wouldn't be here. I really like this country. If this country is to move towards prosperity, I can help it and offer my help but the country needs to walk by itself.
Rondic. A group of workers asked if you would impose a decision which would impose a minimum wage for ministers regardless of the level, so that they realise how it is to live on such a wage, educate their children and feed them	Ashdown. Interesting call. Why doesn't that group of workers say that at the elections? I have to say that your politicians are not that well paid but they have other advantages. In Western European countries, politicians understand that they are not masters. They are servants. If politicians spent more time visiting people, if they understood that the whole purpose of the authorities is to put citizens in first place, then I think that this country could have good politicians. But let me say clearly, not all politicians of this country are bad, there are brave and decent ones but a bad political system prevents them. Above all, I wish that young people should be involved, I think they would improve the situation in this country in a system that would not be dedicated to politicians but services they should provide to citizens.

Rondic. We have heard different opinions by different people on the IC and your role.	"If you want to start an illegal business, it requires one day in BiH. If you want to start a legal business, it requires 100 days. I want people to know that I am aware of the grey economy here where bad laws push away successful people" Dnevni avaz 3 june 2002. "This country has six months to analyse its economy and attract foreign investors. After that, it will face a debt crisis" Dnevni avaz 2 November 2002." "I will create the High Judicial Council at the latest by July and I believe it will start functioning. Its task will be to clear your judicial system" Dnevni avaz 3 June 2002. "Maybe somebody would say that BiH is a desperate region where corruption and organised crime flows. No, it is not true. There are good politicians and brave prosecutors and that is a part of the system that I would really like it to be recognised" Dani, 28 June 2002 "I would like to emphasise that I am determined to put those who break the law in court, where they will have a fair trial and, if found guilty, receive a fair judgement. Special targets will be those dealing with human trafficking, misuse of budgets and public funds, and those who are corrupt. We have the most expensive telephone bills, we have the most expensive electricity bills, which means that the money is taken from the people while others get richer. Criminals. We have to stop that." Dnevni list 22 March 2003 "Him, Radovan Karadzic can slow us down but his obstructions and his hiding in Zelengora cannot stop the reforms" Dnevni Avaz 30 Sept 2002 "If somebody asked which individual action could speed up the peace process, I would say it is the arrest of Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic" Dnevni Avaz 14 Jan 2003. "If the Entity was created by war criminals, if they created it, then it would not be difficult to abolish it. However, it was not". Ljiljan 17 March 2003 "We must start arresting criminals in BiH too and this is what is going to happen in the forthcoming period" Nezavisne novine 26 April 2003 "Unfortunately, the connections between politicians and criminals in this country are often too close. If you see a politician who opposes reforms than I believe you have a good reason to ask yourself why is he doing so" Nezavisne Novine 26 April 2003. "We don't have a single economic space in the region but a single criminal space" Nezavisne Novine 9 April 2003 "I will say that we receive significant support from many countries which send their experts in the fight against organised crime" Dnevni Avaz 18 Dec 2002.
Rondic. Results of the survey	Ashdown. I think it is a cruel and unusual torture to play a politician's words back to him. I think I stay behind everything I said. I said 6 months ago that we needed to accelerate economic reform otherwise we would face a crisis. This is happening now with 50 Bulldozer reforms. I was approached by businesspeople from Slovenia who asked me how I achieved it. I said it wasn't me but the businesspeople from BiH: We have accelerated the reforms but before we leave on summer vacations, there are a few things we need to do. We must shift the sales tax from point of sale to the point of production and import. We must pass the Law on Bankruptcy, we must speed up the privatisation process. We must work on it. I think I said back in April that in the next several weeks and months we must arrest criminals. We have locked up Momcilo Mandic, Mr Bjelica, the accounts of Mr Bjelica are frozen and there will more of it. The first case is tried at the BiH Court and it is claimed that it is the biggest and most important trial for human trafficking. I believe that after my first year, I am roughly where I wanted to be. I will leave up to others to judge whether it is good or bad. My job is not to make myself popular but to do a job which I care about doing, and do it in the proper way. The work goes on and we need to accelerate it. We are half way through the programme, there are many difficult issues that will arise. Just follow what is going on.

Rondic. We Asked viewers to assess your work in the past year 815 votes or 51% positive assessment 784 votes or 49% negative assessment Funny remark by Rondic: "Dayton percentage"	Ashdown. If I had these scores in Britain I would have become prime minister. It is very important to listen to the voice of the people in this country and also important, more important that we put their interests first. What I find in this country in ordinary people is a true desire to put the past behind and to start moving forward with the reforms and changes. If we could provide jobs to everybody in this country, we would not have this destructive nationalism. If we could provide economic security to everybody it would not be difficult to reform the constitution and remove all barriers in it. To make the life of ordinary people better and the rest will follow. I can help in that but as one of your viewers remarked, in the end this country has to do it itself. And the final point is this, I wish my colleagues in BiH had more confidence in themselves. What you have achieved in 7 years since the war is miraculous. No country in history has recovered so fast. The worst is behind us, have confidence in yourselves; the problems ahead of us are not worse than the problems we have overcome. This should give a lot of optimism for the future. With a little bit of optimism, we will accomplish it.
---	---