

High Representative Calls on Officials to Move Forward with Development of Bjelasnica Resort

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, on Monday said he was prepared to become personally involved in co-ordinating the future development of Bjelasnica Mountain as a year-round international tourist destination and he called for the formation of a Bjelasnica Coordination Board to ensure that the huge economic potential of Bjelasnica and Igman mountains is realised, while preserving the area's ecology.

The High Representative was speaking at a meeting at the OHR which was attended by all of the relevant Municipal, Canton, Entity and State officials connected to the development of Bjelasnica and Igman. Those taking part included FBiH Minister of Agriculture Marinko Bozic, FBiH Minister of Urbanism Ramiz Mehmedagic, Canton Sarajevo Prime Minister Denis Zvizdic, Head of the Trnovo Municipality Ibro Berilo and Head of the Hadzici Municipality Halid Bajric. Also present were FIPA Director Mirza Hajric, SERDA member Omer Vatric and Dzemo Bisic, Director of 'ZOI 84'.

"Properly developed in a way that fully preserving their natural beauty, Bjelasnica and Igman mountains can become a European tourist attraction and generate considerable resources for the municipalities of Trnovo and Hadzici, the Sarajevo Canton, the Federation of BiH and BiH as a whole," the High Representative said. "Careful and effective investment could create as many as 5,000 new jobs in the Sarajevo region, developing year-round tourism and facilities. This is what has been done in other European ski resorts."

Noting that Canton Sarajevo has already formed a Council which has worked out development proposals, the High Representative said the Development Co-ordination Board's function would not be to take decisions that should be made by the appropriate, elected authority. Rather the Board would assist in co-ordinating Government, Ministries, Institutions and interested parties so as to facilitate the efficient and effective progress of this project.

Eight of the participants at Monday's meeting will make up the Bjelasnica Development Co-ordination Board, with a final composition to be determined in the coming days. The Board will meet every two weeks. The first meeting of the Board will take place in the next two to three weeks, and will review those steps taken to date to maximise the potential of Bjelasnica and Igman, after which the Development Co-ordination Board will determine practical ways of ensuring progress.