

# HR/EUSR Highlights European Union's Increasing Role in BiH

The High Representative and European Union Special Representative (HR/EUSR), Paddy Ashdown, speaking to police officers in Sarajevo this morning, highlighted the EU's stepped-up engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina, noting that the EU Police Mission (EUPM) is tangible evidence of the importance the EU places on stability in Southeast Europe and closer association with countries in the region. "The EU has shown that it does not have an exit strategy for the Balkans, but rather an entry strategy that ends with EU membership," the HR/EUSR told senior officials from police forces in BiH and from the EUPM.

He said the deployment of the EUPM shows that BiH, "is passing a significant milestone, moving from post-conflict to pre-EU-accession status. If BiH is to continue down this path then establishing the Rule of Law is absolutely crucial. Policing in Bosnia and Herzegovina goes right to the heart of the problems of this country. Without professional local police forces that protect citizens whatever their ethnic identity, there can be no lasting peace and no lasting reconciliation."

EUPM will build on the work done by the UN IPTF, though its mandate is different. The EUPM has fewer personnel, and will be colocated with the local police. They will no longer be responsible for basic training and accreditation. Their mandate is to focus on the strategic challenges facing policing in BiH. The EUPM will not police BiH; it will strive to help the police forces in BiH carry out their duties more professionally and more effectively. The EUPM will focus particularly on the two strategic priorities of helping police guarantee the safety of returnees and tackle the problem of

organised crime. "This is a major step for BiH, which will increasingly take over the business of doing things, rather than having those things done for BiH," the High Representative said.

The HR/EUSR reiterated the priorities he laid out when he took up his post – first justice, then jobs, through reform. "If this effort is to succeed, the whole criminal justice system needs reforming," he said. "BiH's police forces must ensure justice, but you cannot do this alone. That is why we are restructuring the courts, reforming the judiciary and establishing the State Court with a special chamber to deal with complex cases of organised crime. In that way, when you, the police, arrest criminals, you will know that they will face real justice.

The HR/EUSR congratulated European and BiH Police alike for getting the European Union's Police Mission off to a good start, ensuring a seamless transition from UN/IPTF to EUPM.