

High Representative address EU Political and Security Committee

The High Representative and European Union Special Representative (EUSR), Paddy Ashdown, today addressed the EU Political and Security Committee in Brussels. The High Representative in his speech stressed the overriding importance of tackling organized crime in BiH and in the region in general. Organized crime now represents a grave threat both to the future of these countries', to their prospects for a successful transition, and to the security and well-being of the European Union. "We have to conquer this problem of organized crime, for the sake of our own communities, and because left unchecked, it could unravel all we have achieved in BiH and the region" the High Representative said.

The only way to do that effectively is addressing directly the conditions that allow organised crime to flourish: weak and fractured institutions; a large grey economy and porous borders in the region. A successful fight against organised crime depends on the police, certainly: but it also needs good laws, good judges, prosecutors, and prisons. The High Representative reiterated that the establishment of the rule of law must be a priority properly reflected in the co-operation between the region and the EU. "We have to accept that justice doesn't come cheap, but I can tell you one thing for sure: the costs to taxpayers in the Balkans, and those on the streets of our cities, will be less than the price to be paid for letting organized crime complete its insidious attempt to take over in BiH", the High Representative said. In this regard he stressed the importance of the EUPM highlighting that it will take on the problem of organized crime by bringing the full weight of the EU to bear in a co-

ordinated fashion.