

High Representative Outlines Required Action Following "Orao" Scandal

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, today in Sarajevo outlined the steps that the RS and BiH authorities must take following revelations that the Bijeljina based "ORAO" aviation company was trading arms with Iraq, breaching both the Dayton Peace Agreement and UN Security Council Resolutions. At the Press Conference held in Sarajevo today, the High Representative called for swift and appropriate action, primarily in the investigation to ensure that all those responsible face the consequences and secondly in pushing through the reforms that are now essential and inevitable.

"In the short term there must be a full and public enquiry. This will need to involve the State authorities as the State ultimately has responsibility for ensuring BiH respects UN resolutions" said the High Representative adding that those politically responsible for bringing BiH to the brink of international condemnation and pariah status must face the consequences."

In the medium and long term the High Representative called for full co-operation from the RS in putting in place systems which will ensure that similar breaches of international law will not happen again. The High Representative four steps;

First, the full implementation of the BiH Council of Ministers decision on Classification of Goods for Export and Import Regime. This means that the BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations will give the final approval for weapons exports from BiH. The High Representative emphasised that this improved oversight and control system must be in place by 15 November this year.

Secondly, the High Representative called for “a through review of the way that the BiH borders are controlled, and export and imports properly monitored...there must be root and branch reform”.

Thirdly, there must be a through review of the Entity defence structures and a strengthening of the systems of civilian, democratic control. “It is clear that the current system appears to allow parts of the defence industry to operate outside and transparent political control”, said the High Representative.

Fourthly, the High Representative highlighted that “clear lines of responsibility must be established through a strengthened Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM). The incoming BiH Presidency members will be expected to treat this as a matter of urgent priority”.

The Press Conference today was attended by the High Representative together with COMSFOR, the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, the Deputy UNMiBH SRSG and the representative of the Danish EU Presidency. This high level participation indicates the utmost seriousness of the “ORA0” affair. These agencies agreed that OHR Principle Deputy High Representative, Don Hays, will co-ordinate the role of the International Community in this affair.