

Making the BiH Council of Ministers More Efficient and Effective

It has been suggested that reforming the Council of Ministers to make it more effective, for example by ending the principle of rotation, would require changes to the Dayton Peace Agreement and the BiH constitution. This is not the case.

Speaking to international investors and economic administrators at the Joint Institutions Building in Sarajevo on 9 October, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, suggested ways of making the BiH Council of Ministers work more efficiently, so that it can serve citizens' needs and act as a credible interlocutor with international partners.

The High Representative proposed that the merry-go-round in the CoM be stopped, so that stable and effective government can begin. He suggested that the Chair of the Council of Ministers, the Foreign Minister and the Treasury Minister form "the powerful engine room of an effective government." The Chair and the foreign and treasury ministers, could come – one each – from the three Constituent Peoples. To serve the citizens of BiH effectively and deliver reforms crucial for creating new jobs and ensuring justice, they will require a civil service-based secretariat capable of providing administrative and policy planning expertise and support.

Most politicians have reacted constructively to this proposals. A few, however, have suggested that making such a change to the Council of Ministers might be at odds with the Dayton Peace Agreement and would consequently require approval by the Entity parliamentary assemblies.

This is not true. The "rotation" of the Chair of the Council of Ministers is not prescribed in the Dayton Peace Agreement

or the BiH Constitution , nor are the arrangements for the Council of Ministers' secretariat. These arrangements are set out in the Law on the Council of Ministers and can therefore be amended in the same way as any other law. There is no constitutional impediment to implementing the High Representative's proposal.

The High Representative noted when he raised this idea that it has the full backing of the International Community, and he invited the people of BiH and their leaders to consider it. It is consistent with the Dayton Peace Agreement and it is consistent with the goal – supported by all major parties – to put government back into the service of the people and give citizens more efficient and effective services.