

OHR Calls on Government Leaders to End Damaging Legislative Delays

The OHR has called on BiH government leaders to end delays in passing crucial economic legislation. The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, in his inaugural address to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, defined his priorities as “first justice, then jobs, through reform.” He went on to say that in modern economies, governments are responsible for creating the conditions in which investors and entrepreneurs can create jobs. He agrees with those who say that in BiH, economic legislation is often inadequate and contradictory. This discourages rather than encourages private enterprise and foreign investment. The High Representative believes that the governments both at the state and entity levels need to do more to make BiH a more attractive place for investment and job creation, and in particular to get sensible economic legislation onto the statute books.

On Tuesday, the Principal Deputy High Representative, Don Hays, sent a letter to Chairman of the Council of Ministers Dragan Mikerevic and Entity Prime Ministers Alija Behmen and Mladen Ivanic expressing grave concern about the failure of the state and Entity governments to secure passage of laws that are crucial for the creation of the Single Economic Space (SES) and the normal functioning of the BiH economy.

The Single Economic Space is a central plank in efforts to generate wealth, create jobs and raise living standards, yet the constant delays suggest “that the government bodies are not committed to improving the lives of people of this country,” Ambassador Hays wrote.

He called for a new show of commitment to the passage of

twelve of the most critical laws.

He noted that passage of the State Veterinary Law will pave the way for a certification system that would allow the export of agricultural products from BiH to the European Union and other countries, potentially leading to the creation of thousands of new jobs. Yet this law, like other crucial pieces of legislation, is stuck in parliamentary procedure.

In the transport sector, appropriate legislation must be passed as soon as possible to attract direct foreign investment and facilitate and encourage exports. In the communication and electricity sectors, monopolies continue to exist, meaning high rates for individual citizens. An international phone call from BiH is more expensive than calls from any other country in Europe.

“These are common sense laws for the everyday functioning of a normal economy,” Ambassador Hays wrote. “These laws are not radical or controversial. They set in place the practical conditions that enable businesspeople to get on with the job of creating wealth, expanding trade and employment, and raising living standards for the hardworking people of this country.”

Ambassador Hays urged the government leaders to do everything possible to have these laws passed, assuring them of the full support of the International Community in this task.

Single Economic Space Laws that Require Urgent Passage

<u>Law</u>	<u>Current Status</u>
BiH: <i>State Veterinary Law</i>	Pending before BiH Parliamentary Assembly for three weeks.
FBiH: <i>Amendments of Law on Banks</i>	Submitted to the Federal Government in May.

FBiH: <i>Law on Federation Investment Bank</i>	Awaiting the FBiH Government decision to privatize or not to privatize.
FBiH and RS: <i>Law on Land Registry Books</i>	RS draft still in Ministry of Justice, FBiH draft law awaits consideration of the House of Representatives.
BiH: <i>Law on Concessions</i>	Repeatedly rejected in the Houses of Parliament often for the lack of RS quorum.
BiH: <i>Law on Statistics</i>	Failed due to the lack of RS support in the House of Representatives of BiH Parliament.
BiH: <i>Law on Registration of Legal Persons established by BiH Institutions</i>	Failed in both houses of BiH Parliamentary Assembly after being adopted by the Council of Ministers.
BiH: <i>Amendment of Aviation Law</i>	Crucial amendments blocked in both Houses of BiH Parliamentary Assembly.
BiH: <i>Communication Law</i>	Pending before the Council of Ministers since last November.
FBiH and RS: <i>Electricity Laws</i>	At a standstill in both RSNA and the Fed. Parliament. Further restructuring will be delayed up to a year without these laws.

<p>BiH: <i>Law on Customs Tariffs</i></p>	<p>Passed by the Council of Ministers but has been blocked for months in BiH Parliamentary Assembly.</p>
<p>BiH: <i>Law on establishment of BiH Employment Agency</i></p>	<p>Adopted by the Council of Ministers, pending before the BiH Parliamentary Assembly.</p>