

UN Security Council debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina

The UN Security Council on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina welcoming the European Union's decision to take over the UN's police training and monitoring duties, from 1 January 2003. The Council also expressed its unanimous appreciation for the achievements of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, during his nearly three years in BiH. The High Representative informed the Council on Tuesday of his intention to leave his post at the end of May. The Council endorsed the Peace Implementation Council's nomination of Paddy Ashdown as the next High Representative.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan paid tribute to the High Representative, noting that his "effective leadership helped secure the gains made by the International Community" in BiH in recent years.

Security Council members praised the High Representative's work and assured him that he will continue to enjoy their full support for the remainder of his term. They expressed satisfaction with the current measures being taken to streamline the operations of the International Community in BiH and they called on political leaders in BiH to reach a compromise agreement on the implementation of the Constitutional Court's ruling on the constituency of peoples.

The European Union's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, said that progress in BiH "has been due in no small part " to his friend, Wolfgang Petritsch. Mr Solana cited the adoption of important pieces of state-level legislation, an increase in so-called minority returns and the steady strengthening of BiH's institutions, which, he

said, showed that real progress is possible given the political will. However, Mr Solana criticised the slow pace of BiH politicians in adopting EU Road Map conditions, and he warned that unless BiH embraces reform and Europeanisation "it will be left behind by more ambitious and more far-sighted neighbours."

The UN Secretary General's Special Representative in BiH Jacques Paul Klein, who also participated in the Security Council session, supported the High Representative's call for continuing judicial reform.

The United Kingdom congratulated Mr Petritsch warmly for his dedication, noting that he has exercised leadership at extremely difficult times and that his term in office will be "a hard act to follow."

The United States congratulated the High Representative for his "extraordinary commitment" and noted that BiH is substantially more stable as a result of his work.

The United States called for more progress by BiH leaders on "hard choices", such as reaching agreement on implementing the Constitutional Court's ruling, making arrangements for the October elections, adopting the State and Federation budgets, and implementing comprehensive judicial reform. The United States also offered strong support for SFOR's robust action in regard to apprehending indicted war criminals and called on the Republika Srpska to cooperate fully with the ICTY.

Russia noted that the potential of Dayton is far from being exhausted, and said that a solid foundation for BiH statehood is now in place. Russia urged BiH leaders to find a compromise solution to implementing the Constitutional Court's ruling, appealing to politicians from both Entities to "rise above narrow ethnic interests".

Croatia noted that the High Representative has found himself in "virtually impossible" political situations during his term

but has nonetheless prevailed. Croatia, too, appealed to BiH leaders to reach a just solution in the current constitutional talks.

The FRY underlined the satisfactory development of state-to-state relations between the FRY and BiH, and welcomed the OSCE's refugee-return initiative, which coordinates the return efforts of the FRY, Croatia and BiH.

BiH thanked the High Representative for his commitment and leadership, welcomed the EUPM and expressed support for judicial reform.

On Monday, the High Representative and Secretary General Kofi Annan had a bilateral meeting, where they discussed the status of the constitutional talks, and the arrangements which must be made in order to ensure a smooth hand-over from the IPTF to the EUPM. The High Representative reiterated his view that the arrest and transfer to The Hague of all indicted war criminals, including Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, is essential for stability and progress in BiH. He added that the trial of Slobodan Milosevic demonstrates the necessity of determining individual responsibility, through due process of law, so that an entire people cannot be held accountable for crimes committed by a small minority. The High Representative also briefed the Secretary General on judicial reform, and on efforts to reduce the size of the Entity armed forces.

On Tuesday, before the Security Council session, the High Representative met with Mr Jan Petersen, the Foreign Minister of Norway, who chaired the session. Mr Petersen stressed the urgency of finding a local solution in the constitutional talks. He also said that he was concerned about the political situation in the RS and the unsatisfactory level of RS cooperation with the ICTY. The High Representative welcomed Norway's contribution to the Dayton implementation process and its possible participation in the EUPM, as well as its commitment to the judicial reform programme.

In bilateral talks on Tuesday, the High Representative and the EU's Javier Solana discussed arrangements for the EUPM, and the overall EU engagement in BiH, which, Mr Petritsch said, aptly matches BiH's efforts to pursue a Europeanisation strategy. Mr Petritsch said he hoped Mr Solana would be able to visit Sarajevo in the course of the coming weeks.