

High Representative briefs OSCE Permanent Council

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today – together with OSCE Head of Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Robert Beecroft – briefed the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on the current status of the peace implementation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In addition to his written statement, the High Representative stressed during the discussion the urgent need for reforms in BiH as donor fatigue has set in and aid is declining. He reiterated the need for the authorities to embrace the concept of ownership and move the country forward in dialogue with the International Community through the Consultative Partnership Forum. The High Representative stressed that there was encouraging and broad-based evidence of concrete progress in political and economic reconstruction and that conditions for a real transformation existed. But he added that the political leadership of BiH had to embrace reform and now take the tough decisions that come with it.

“The final phase of Dayton Peace Implementation will be at the same time as the crucial phase of Europeanisation”, the High Representative said. “Ownership must therefore be exercised in the framework of European standards.” With this regard, the High Representative said that international efforts should be geared towards Bosnia and Herzegovina’s integration in Europe. He mentioned that the first steps in this process were BiH’s accession to the Council of Europe and the fulfilment of the “EU Road Map”, which would qualify BiH for a feasibility study related to the conclusion of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union. As the peace implementation process had already begun to overlap with the Europeanisation process, the High Representative said that it was important to maintain this momentum.

All delegations expressed their support for the work of the High Representative and the OSCE Head of Mission. The European Union specifically stressed that Bosnia-Herzegovina could only move towards Europe in the framework of a unified state, and called for the urgent implementation of the steps set out in the EU Road Map. Moreover, the EU encouraged the initiatives of the International Community towards promoting independent public broadcasting.