

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference

OHR

HR to Visit Banja Luka

The High Representative will visit Banja Luka tomorrow where he will meet senior RS political leaders. One of the main topics of discussion will be Police restructuring.

The remaining legislative and administrative task which must be implemented before BiH can move forward along the path to Europe – is police reform.

Police reform is about making the police more effective. It's about giving the police the organisational and operational structures that will help them catch criminals. It will remove the barriers to policing that are currently posed by the IEBL and cantonal boundaries.

The removal of cantonal and entity boundaries will help remove political interference in the work of the police. It will hence make police more responsible to citizens, not politicians.

The Police Restructuring Commission Report issued in January launched a public debate. This is a crucial debate, because its outcome will have a direct bearing on the security of the citizens of this country and will determine BiH's progress towards Europe.

The High Representative is currently taking part in a series of live phone-in radio discussion programmes with the object of clarifying the debate about police reform: to make sure that the real issues — of citizens' security and the broader European integration agenda — are to the fore.

The EU has made it clear that if BiH wants to begin negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, police restructuring must go forward on the basis of three principles:

- All legislative and budgetary competencies must be vested at the state level.
- Police reform must proceed on the basis of geographical regions that have been drawn up to ensure maximum efficiency.
- Political interference in policing must be eliminated.

It will offer policemen and policewomen an equal salary structure and more career opportunities. And it will also help pave the way towards a softening of the visa regime for BiH citizens travelling to the EU.

This morning the High Representative participated in a call-in programme on Radio East Sarajevo.

We'll be issuing a media advisory with more details about the visit later today.