

Adopting State Ombudsman Law Will Boost SAA Process

Senior Deputy High Representative Martin Ney today called on the members of the BiH Parliament Joint Harmonization Committee to reach agreement on the text of the State Ombudsman Law. The Committee will meet on Wednesday to make a final effort to reach consensus on accepting the House of Peoples' version of the Law. The State Ombudsman Law was adopted in different texts by the House of Representatives on 8 November and the House of People on 28 November last year. It has been on the agenda of the Harmonization Committee since 4 January 2006.

"Any further delay in enacting the State Ombudsman Law will only hamper BiH's prospects within the SAA process," Ambassador Ney said today. "BiH parliamentarians must demonstrate their ability to comply with international obligations and thus fully endorse this Law in the House of People version. This will be a substantial boost for the next round of SAA negotiations."

Adoption of the State Ombudsman Law, which provides for the merger of the Entity Ombudsman Offices at the State level, is one of a small number of Council of Europe post-accession requirements that BiH still has to fulfill. As such, it is also a requirement of BiH's EU Stabilisation and Association process. Ambassador Ney warned that failure to reach consensus on harmonizing the Law would damage an important BiH institution, and he urged the Committee to adopt the HoP version of the Law.

"Insisting on the HoR version would undermine the basic principles of the Law," Ambassador Ney said. "Adopting such a version would represent a clear disregard for the Council of Europe and would send entirely the wrong signal about BiH as a

country that does not fulfill its international obligations.”