

EU Conditions Start of SAA on Reform Process

The High Representative, in his role as the EU's Special Representative to BiH, Paddy Ashdown today attended a meeting chaired by the EU's High Representative for a Common Foreign and Security Javier Solana in Brussels. The meeting was also attended by all of the other EU Special Representatives.

At the meeting, Dr Solana reaffirmed earlier statements that the EU remains committed to BiH and the region, but underlined that it is up to the BiH government, and particularly the RS, to create the circumstances necessary to start the Stabilisation and Association process.

At the end of the meeting, Paddy Ashdown stated: "the message is clear. Brussels wants the countries of the Balkans to join. But the question lies less with Brussels and more with Banja Luka. Is Banja Luka ready to undertake the commitment to reform that is necessary for SAA talks to begin?" Progress towards SAA was stalled following the failure of multiparty talks to come to an agreement on police restructuring.

The meeting followed the PIC's announcement last week, where participants underlined that the sooner BiH starts the SAA process, the sooner the PIC will be in a position to begin the phase out of the OHR. At the meeting, the EUSRs also discussed their experiences and lessons learned in the light of the EU's foreign policy.

Following the meeting, Paddy Ashdown traveled to London to meet British Foreign Minister Jack Straw, where he will outline BiH's progress towards the EU and NATO.

The UK will take over the rotating EU Presidency on July 1.

Note: There are currently 7 EUSRs: in BiH, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia , Afghanistan , South Caucasus, the Great Lake Region in central Africa, Moldova and one EUSR who monitors the Middle East Peace Process.