

High Representative Addresses the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, attended a series of high level meetings and addressed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in Brussels today.

Whilst in Brussels, the High Representative met bi-laterally with Madeleine Albright who was attending her final meeting of the EAPC as US Secretary of State. In her address to the EAPC she congratulated the High Representative "for the outstanding job he has done in Bosnia and Herzegovina" adding that "we can help by remaining united in our support for further economic reform and the creation of joint security institutions".

The High Representative held meetings with the Greek Foreign Minister, George Papandeu and Hans Haekkerup, Denmark's Defense Minister, and the man nominated to succeed Bernard Kouchner as head of the UN's Kosovo Mission in the coming weeks. The High Representative also met separately with the Foreign Ministers of the Countries in the Balkan region – with the exclusion of Yugoslavia and BiH – who, as they have no relations with the EAPC, were not present.

At the request of the EAPC the High Representative briefed the Foreign Ministers of the 46 members of the EAPC, which includes all the NATO Countries plus twenty-seven "Partner" Countries, on a number of issues including; the recent election results and military reform in BiH.

Highlighting that consideration must be given to the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina has been through a much tougher period than Croatia and Yugoslavia, the High Representative stated that the strong showing for progressive, pro-European parties reflected the positive changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina's

political landscape.

The High Representative pointed out that the NATO led Stabilisation Force has a continuing crucial role to play in consolidating the peace and “urged NATO members to continue their efforts to arrest people indicted for war crimes [whose] presence prevents any reduction in the climate of fear”; a factor that is so easily motivated for political purposes in BiH.

The High Representative assessed talk of regional security arrangements and Partnership for Peace membership by Bosnian politicians as premature “until the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrate their will to implement a Common Defence Policy” through the Standing Committee for Military Matters.

If Bosnia and Herzegovina is to reap the benefits of membership of this and other European institutions, such as the Council of Europe and the European Union, then elected politicians must start taking the tough decisions themselves. With constructive support from the new governments in Belgrade and Zagreb real progress is possible.