

High Representative: “BiH needs to show a new seriousness on security issues”

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, wrote today to Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Adnan Terzic, urging him and the Council to put in parliamentary procedure, without any further delays, the Draft Law on Intelligence and Security Agency.

It has been more than two months since the Intelligence Reform Commission, lead by Hungarian Intelligence Expert Kalman Kocsis, submitted the Draft to the Council of Ministers. The de-politicized Agency under democratic Parliamentary control was supposed to begin its work as of January 1, 2004, but because of politically driven amendments BiH can't demonstrate its readiness to join Europe in fight against international terrorism, organized crime and human trafficking.

The High Representative believes that security must now be top of BiH's agenda, given the international security situation. BiH needs to show a new seriousness on security issues, and the first test of that new seriousness will be the intelligence law. The High Representative told Prime Minister Terzic: “It will be a grave indictment of the Council of Ministers, and their willingness to take national security seriously, if the Council of Ministers cannot pass the law into parliament by 15 December. There have already been enough delays, and further delay will undermine this country's security, and its international reputation for taking national security issues seriously.”

Any further delay now will seriously endanger our chances of

getting the new service fully operational early in the New Year. "Such a failure would serve only to convince the international community that BiH does not have the institutional capacity for Euro-Atlantic integration nor for the fight against terrorism", the High Representative said in the letter.

In his letter to PM Terzic, the High Representative advised appointing a small, *ad hoc* Intelligence Reform Working Group. Such a Working Group could have a chair and two members who would work with the international community in preparation of the Agency's establishment. With enactment of the Law members might be appointed to the key positions in the Agency, which would provide continuity in intelligence reform and would allow the CoM to maintain the institutional apparatus necessary to oversee implementation of this complex reform.