

High Representative Extended Defence Reform Commission Mandate

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, has today extended the mandate of the Defence Reform Commission and its chairman, James Locher. This extension will help BiH make real and timely progress in implementing defence reforms that will allow it to fulfil the membership conditions for NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) and so make it a credible candidate for PfP at the Alliance's Istanbul Summit in June 2004. In the Decision, the High Representative also appointed Major General (Ret.) John Drewienkiewicz as a Vice-Chairman of the Commission.

Progress on fulfilling PfP conditions has been made, however, the Federation Parliament and Government have not kept pace with the State Parliament and with the RSNA in setting up a modern State-level defence establishment. The Federation Law on Defence has still to be harmonised with the State Law on Defence, and a new Federation Law on Army Service has to be adopted as soon as possible.

Announcing the extension of the Commission's mandate the High Representative noted that "Ultimate responsibility for implementing the DRC's recommendations will continue to lie with the BiH authorities, but it remains necessary to assist and monitor progress."

"The entire landscape in BiH defence has changed dramatically since the DRC first met on 4 June 2003 – today, we have only one defence establishment in BiH, one team, one fight", said Commission Chairman Locher.