

High Representative Highlights Progress in BiH, Welcomes Continued US Engagement

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is holding a series of meetings in Washington this week, including his final consultations with US State Department officials in his capacity as High Representative.

The High Representative met on Wednesday evening with US Senator John McCain, and was scheduled to meet Thursday with US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns, US Deputy National Security Advisor JD Crouch and World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz. The High Representative was accompanied at these meetings by Principal Deputy High Representative Larry Butler.

The High Representative expressed his appreciation for the support the US administration has given to the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina in general and to the OHR in particular.

And he welcomed the US government's commitment to maintain its engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Europe remains the destination but US engagement remains crucial, the High Representative said, noting that, with the launch of Stabilisation and Association negotiations, EU accession will be the focus of BiH's economic and political transition strategy from now on, but that this will be complimentary to – and not exclusive of – a continuing and substantial role in BiH for the United States.

"Continued US engagement in implementing crucial reforms,

including those in the fields of defence and police, is essential," the High Representative said.

"The ability to achieve success in key reforms has been as a result of the unified and broad-based International Community coalition which has enabled BiH to move so far in the 10 years since the signing of the Peace Accord in Dayton ," he added.

He stressed that the apprehension and transfer to The Hague of the remaining war crimes indictees, including Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, is a prerequisite for BiH to move forward decisively in its transition from the Dayton Era to the Brussels Era.

The High Representative also noted that while the BiH economy is continuing to grow, progress already made in instituting economic reforms must now be accelerated so that the benefits of these reforms, in terms of more jobs and better services, can be delivered to citizens.