

High Representative Reaction Following Failure To Appoint Canton 7 Government

“By voting against forming a government in Canton 7, the SDA and the SBiH have turned their backs on the citizens who elected them, a full eight months ago” the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, said yesterday following the failure of the Canton 7 Parliament to elect a Government. He added that “the citizens of Canton 7 cannot afford to wait any longer; teachers and doctors have important jobs to do but are not being paid; politicians are being paid, but are not doing their job; vital public services are being undermined and so too is BiH’s international reputation”. The High Representative warned, “the irresponsibility of some politicians in Canton 7 has now reached a level where it could affect the EU’s feasibility study of BiH, and slow the process of European integration.”

Mr Tihic and Mr Halilovic as leaders of the two parties whose representatives voted against the agreed Government nominations will have to explain why their parties in Canton 7 voted against the government list that they themselves had signed. The High Representative expects them to take decisive action to ensure that their parties in the Canton honour their leaders’ commitment.

The High Representative could not stand by and see the interests of the citizens of Canton 7, and BiH’s path to Europe, put at risk in this way.

The High Representative has therefore taken the following decisions:

- To cut, with immediate effect, the party financing that the SDA

and the SBiH receive from the State, Federation, Canton 7 and Canton 7 municipalities' budgets by 10% as of next year – an irrevocable fine of 66,000 KM for the two parties.

- To reduce the salaries of the caretaker Ministers in Canton 7 to that of the average wage in BiH, to reflect the reduced workload of these ministers, and to make savings for the Canton 7 budget and the taxpayer.
- At 6pm on Monday 16 June, if there is still no government, to carry out the following:
 - to start to cut party financing by an additional 5% for every working day until a government is formed;
 - to cancel the appointment of the Speaker-Elect, Mr. Omer Cevra, without possibility of reappointment to that post, for failing in his constitutional duty to muster a consensus behind forming a government in Canton 7.
 - to take such measures as he deems appropriate in light of developments over the next few days.
- To examine ways of redistributing the sequestered funds from the SDA and the SBiH to the people who have paid the highest price for the irresponsibility of their politicians. The High Representative will consider ways to allocate 25% for teachers and education, 25% for doctors and healthcare, 25% for pensioners and 25% for refugee return.

The reason the High Representative has fined the SDA and the SBiH from the 2004 Political parties financing budget is that it appears that these parties have already paid themselves, up front and in full, the funds allocated to them for the whole of 2003. In the Federation alone, that amounts to 1.5 million KM, the equivalent of the gross monthly salary of 2,500 elementary school teachers. The High Representative said yesterday “this in itself appears to be a stark indication of where their true priorities lie: not to the citizens, to teachers, or pensioners, but to themselves and their party followers.”