

High Representative to travel to Brussels to brief NATO and the EU

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will be in Brussels on Wednesday 30 October to brief NATO and the EU on the reform process now underway in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and on how, if these reforms are implemented, they should accelerate the process of moving BiH closer to these two institutions. He will also report on the Oraq affair.

The High Representative will, together with COMSFOR, General William Ward, address a joint meeting of the North Atlantic Council and the EU's security and foreign affairs committee, the PSC, on Wednesday. He will also meet EU Commissioner for Foreign Relations Chris Patten, as well as NATO Secretary-General George Robertson. The High Representative will explain recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially with regard to the reform agenda and the Oraq affair. BiH needs to push the necessary reforms in order to move on its way to enter European structures.

During his visit, the High Representative will reassure both NATO and the EU that there is no reason why the recent elections should stop the reform process. He will tell them that all the parties in BiH are now committed to reform, but that what now matters are deeds not words. He will say that while the nationalist parties will have to work long and hard to convince the people of BiH that they are genuinely committed to reforms that are in the interests of all the citizens of BiH, it will be his job to work with the new government to ensure that these reforms are implemented.

On the Oraq affair, he will say that if BiH has contravened the UN arms embargo against Iraq, as now seems likely, then

this is potentially the most serious situation facing BiH since the end of the war. He will explain to NATO and the EU that we are now requesting that the RS authorities do two things. First, that they carry out a full and public investigation into the affair, and involve the BiH authorities in this investigation. Once the facts are established, we will expect to see action taken to repair the damage done to BiH's international reputation by ensuring that those who are implicated take responsibility for what has happened. Second, we expect to see the RS authorities work with us to put in place the systems to prevent this from ever happening again. This will mean reforming the way in which arms exports are controlled. It will also mean improving the systems for checking and controlling what is imported and exported across BiH's borders. And it will mean addressing the wider issue of civilian control over the military-industrial complex.