

High Representative Welcomes BiH Euro-Atlantic Vision

The High Representative today welcomed the results of yesterday's sessions of the RSNA and the BiH House of Peoples.

"Bosnia and Herzegovina's legislative bodies took several important steps yesterday towards fulfilling its Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations", he said. "The progress on Police reform and the breakthrough in Defence Reform and Public Broadcasting that we saw yesterday was not easy, but the Gordian knot has started to unravel and the decisions taken yesterday will propel Bosnia and Herzegovina ultimately towards EU and NATO membership."

The RSNA yesterday for the first time voted decisively to uphold the EC's three principles on Police reform. Provided that BiH's other Parliaments now meet the three EC principles for police reform, a crucial step will have been taken towards enabling the European Commission to recommend the launch of SAA negotiations this year. The meaning is clear; within five years BiH will have a single integrated police service at the state level, and local police areas, which will cross the IEBL in the limited areas where it is technically necessary.

At the same time, The BiH House of Peoples yesterday adopted BiH's Defence Law and the Law on Service in the BiH Armed Forces. This reform opens the roads towards accession into NATO's Partnership for Peace and eventually to full membership in NATO.

Significant progress was also made in reform of the PBS yesterday, when the BiH House of Peoples adopted the Public Broadcasting System Law, the other outstanding requirement for the launch of Stabilisation and Association negotiations.

"Membership of PfP, and eventually NATO, the world's most

powerful and successful security alliance, will greatly enhance BiH's security. It is proof that of the willingness of the BiH authorities to overcome their military past," said the High Representative.

"These reforms are yet to be completed, and BiH must focus on full co-operation with the ICTY, but it's institutions have shown that they can tackle the most difficult burdens of BiH's past, in favour of a more stable and secure BiH on the road to the EU and NATO. This increased political legitimacy encourages the investment which can create jobs that ordinary people in BiH are so desperate for", said the High Representative today.