

# HR gives presentation to the Venice Commission

The High Representative Paddy Ashdown today gave a presentation to the Venice Commission, on constitutional issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina . The Venice Commission is the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional matters.

In his presentation, the High Representative stated his aim, since the start of his mandate has been "putting BiH irreversibly on the road to Statehood and membership of the EU."

"I made clear that Dayton and the BiH Constitution should be viewed as the foundation and not the ceiling. Since then we have sought to facilitate the evolution of BiH's constitutional order and institutional framework in a manner that will underpin rather than undermine the functioning of the State."

He pointed out that if BiH wishes to join the EU and NATO "it will need a fully functioning state and nothing less."

"The days when Bosnia and Herzegovina 's future is thrashed out in a marbled European palace, or on the grounds of an American air force base, are gone. We have reached a stage in BiH's political development where only the people of BiH can agree what kind of country they want to live in."

He said that BiH political leaders will in the future face a choice – "to maintain the current constitution and pay the economic, social and political consequences, or make the constitutional changes required to make Bosnia and Herzegovina a stable, functional and prosperous country within the European Union."