

OHR Calls For Leadership In Police Restructuring

The OHR welcomes the important meeting of government institutions on police restructuring which will take place in Mrakovica tomorrow. It expects senior representatives, with negotiating authority, to attend these talks and to participate constructively in order to advance the process of negotiations on police reform.

Police restructuring in line with EU principles is the last major requirement that has to be met if BiH is to qualify to start crucial negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. It is also essential if BiH is to effectively tackle organised crime, obtain easier access to visas, and if the link between politics and policing is to be severed.

BiH needs to reach an agreement on police restructuring by the beginning of September if it is to qualify for these key negotiations in time for the tenth anniversary of Dayton in November, and if it is to have any chance of catching up with its immediate neighbours, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro. The conditions for EU membership are non-negotiable, and until BiH's politicians are prepared to make reforms which meet these conditions, BiH's path to Europe will remain blocked.

BiH's government leaders therefore face a simple choice: whether to display the leadership, and face up to the tough decisions, required to take this country forward, or to duck those decisions and face the consequences, for themselves, and for BiH as a whole. It is important for BiH – and its leaders to show they are serious about this by acting in a responsible manner, putting the country, not political manoeuvring, first.

Opinion after opinion poll, in the RS and the Federation, show that the people of this country take this seriously and know very clearly what they want. We expect no less of the country's leader. Four out of five citizens want to join the EU. They want politics out of policing. And they want their politicians to lead this country forward into modern Europe, not chain it to its past.

Tomorrow's meeting will be a test of whether this country's governments can rise to this challenge.

OHR will not be attending these negotiations but is ready to provide technical assistance if called on.