

OHR's Statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference in Banja Luka

PIC Communiqué outlines priorities

As you know the Political Directors for the PIC Steering Board met in Paris yesterday. Last night they issued their joint communiqué.

Yesterday you received a copy of the commemorative communiqué that was issued to mark the tenth anniversary of Dayton. The details that I am about to announce today are drawn from the text of the regular communiqué issued after every PIC meeting outlining current policy priorities.

The Political Directors for the PIC Steering Board welcomed the opening of SAA negotiations, but noted that the speed of BiH's progress in these negotiations will depend on the commitment and hard work of BiH's political representatives, as well as on the effectiveness of the institutions.

In particular, they stressed the need to make significant progress on police reform, on ICTY cooperation.

They welcomed the recent commitment by political parties to pursue constitutional reform, but urged them to meet the March 2006 deadline for the first phase of reform, and thereby honor their agreement made on 21 November in Washington.

They also expressed concern about the lack of frequency with which the Council of Ministers meets, noting that the Council of ministers has only met five times in the past three months, and has adopted only four laws.

On police reform, they urged the Council of Ministers and appropriate authorities in BiH to ensure that the Directorate is fully staffed by the 31 December deadline set by the BiH authorities. They said that police reform is essential in the fight against organized crime and terrorism and said that the PIC will monitor progress on police reform very closely.

On ICTY, they expressed their sharp dissatisfaction with the lack of recent cooperation - noting that the two most wanted war criminals Mladic and Karadzic remain at large. They noted that the recent arrest of Gotovina, in which the Croatian authorities cooperated, represents the kind of approach that the BiH authorities must emulate.