

Press Conference by the High Representative and EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák

Today is 1 October and the deadline for agreement on police reform has passed. Unfortunately, what has been achieved is not enough to continue the Stabilisation and Association Process with the European Union. It is in the hands of political leaders to change this situation by coming to an agreement on police reform.

What is at stake and what needs to be done to make progress in the process of European integration was clear to everyone.

I have to say that, as of today, we do not have a political agreement that enjoys the support of the required majority and that is in line with the three European principles.

I want to thank all those who were constructive from the very beginning, or later during the process, in looking for a solution. In particular, I wish to thank HDZ BiH and HDZ 1990, and the SDA with its President Mr Tihic. They all supported the "Draft Protocol on Meeting the Police Reform Requirements Necessary for Initialling and Signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement", which I put forward and which meets the three EU principles. They have shown responsibility towards their country and its European future.

On Friday afternoon I received a paper reflecting the views of SBiH and SNSD. I informed them, and I wish to state this publicly, that it is positive that these two party leaders have taken the police issue and the future of the country seriously and decided to work towards a solution. This was not the case in the past, and the country suffered as a result. It is encouraging that they have narrowed their positions on this key issue. The document however leaves some key questions

unresolved. I have asked both party leaders for clarification on these points.

Based on what I just told you, there is more work to be done before we can say that police reform is proceeding in line with expectations from the European Union.

What I am seeing is a new level of engagement by political leaders and this is certainly positive and encouraging.

It has always been up to the political leaders to find a solution and make compromises. That is the European way of conducting politics.

You know that I truly want Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward, on a European path, and to succeed in this endeavour.

We know that Montenegro will sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in the next few days and it looks like Serbia could initial its SAA in mid-October. There is still a chance for BiH not to be left behind. I have spoken with Commissioner Rehn about recent developments and we agreed that, in light of encouraging developments, the European Commission could wait a few more days – but only *a few days*. Therefore we, the European Union and the International Community, expect BiH leaders to do their best to come to an agreement as soon as possible – an agreement that will meet the European requirements and will have the necessary political support.

All politicians – some sooner than others – have shown a readiness to respect the due process and make progress towards finding a compromise. This is encouraging in any case, and they should follow this road to the end. It would be a real shame if they stopped half way. Now is the time to leave behind the negative rhetoric and engage in constructive political dialogue to find a solution, which is much closer today than it was a few days ago.