

Statement: High Representative Responds to European Commission Statement on Police Reform

In response to the statement issued by the European Commission today noting the important step forward that has been made on delivering PBS legislation this week, but at the same time highlighting that police reform now must be tackled without delay if there is to be any possibility of commencing Stabilisation and Association negotiations before the end of the year, the High Representative said the following:

“The European Commission has now outlined the next steps that need to be taken in order for BiH to start SAA negotiations. It has clearly singled out police reform as the principle remaining obstacle.

The clock is ticking. Negotiations on police reform must re-open as soon as possible if BiH is to receive a green light from the Commission by the tenth anniversary of Dayton, and join the other countries in the region on the path towards Europe.”

Negotiations on police restructuring stalled after the RS government failed to accept the principle that police regions must cross entity borders where necessary, in order to fulfill the EU’s three requirements for police reform.

“The question now lies with Banja Luka. Is Banja Luka ready to re-open negotiations on police reform? Is Banja Luka ready to accept police restructuring according to the EU’s principles,” said the HR.

The EU has stated that police reform must place exclusive competence for police legislation and budget at the State level, recast regional police areas on the basis of functional police criteria, and help protect the police from improper political interference.