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

Reforms must be implemented

As you know, the High Representative returned last night together with Prime Minister Terzic, from a visit to Brussels, where they held talks with senior EU officials including Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn and High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana.

The High Representative has made it clear that there is still a path forward for BiH out of the present political impasse – and if it follows this path the prospect of this country’s European future being lost as a result of the stalled police reform negotiations can be avoided.

The High Representative, the Prime Minister and the European Commission have made it their joint ambition that by the tenth anniversary of Dayton BiH to be in a position to launch negotiations.

This is an ambitious goal but an achievable one – it can only be met if the political leadership renews its commitment to getting this country irrevocably onto the EU integration path, with all the benefits to citizens that that entails.

In Brussels, BiH received the renewed commitment of the European Commission to support this country in its efforts to complete the necessary reforms, and there was a clear and resolute agreement that BiH can and must catch up with the rest of the Balkans and cross the threshold into the European process by the tenth anniversary of Dayton.

High Representative Solana and Commissioner Rehn made it clear that the EU remains firmly committed to a European future for the western Balkans. And BiH can still be part of that future.

Equally clear was the EU's unchanged position on PBS reform and police reform – these must be completed.

The clock is ticking; there is not a moment to lose. If BiH politicians do the right thing, they will have the full support of Brussels.

PDHR to Present Banking Award

The Principal Deputy High Representative, Larry Butler, will be one of the presenters at an award ceremony being held in Sarajevo today to recognize excellence in the banking industry.

Ambassador Butler will, among other things, highlight the fact that a vibrant banking sector is the *sine qua non* of a sustained economic recovery. Banks in BiH are beginning to finance growth. Interest rates are falling – a reflection of BiH's better economic performance and lower economic risk, as well as increased and beneficial competition among banks. The message from this and other developments is that BiH is increasingly open for business – and this must be translated into greater prosperity for citizens.