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

The Challenge For BiH’s Political Representatives

In his speech to the BiH Parliaments House of Representatives yesterday the High Representative underlined that the over-riding twin strategic objectives have been long established; membership of NATO’s PfP and the launch of formal negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement – the SAA – with the EU.

There are only two key issues which remain outstanding For the EU: the adoption of a law on the Public Broadcasting System in line with Dayton principles and EC requirements; and agreement on police restructuring in line with EU principles.

The over-riding objective is to clear these two remaining obstacles in the next few weeks. To do this the High Representative appealed to BiH politicians to forge a genuine political consensus – across parties, transcending government and opposition – on the EU reform agenda.

The fact that these matters only too often become casualties of party political battles is a matter that is clear to all; particularly BiH’s electorate. Recent polling – and you can get graphic representations of all of this from me afterwards – show that there is a disconnect between peoples expectations and their perceived ability of their representatives, both Government and opposition, to deliver. The zero sum game that is BiH’s political reality has serious repercussions on BiH’s population.

As you can see a clear 86% of BiH’s population want BiH to

join the EU. What should be of the greatest concern to all elected representatives is that the majority of people in BiH feel that it is the international community that will get them into the EU fastest. Furthermore, over 65% of people feel that both Governing and opposition parties lack credibility. This message couldn't be clearer.

How to address this? As the High Representative said yesterday [I quote] "every single country that has succeeded in joining the EU in recent years has formed a consensus across political parties, has managed to put EU reforms above the day-to-day political fray" [end quote].

BiH has a huge opportunity in front it: to cross the threshold into the Stabilisation and Association Process – the SAA this year before the 10th Anniversary of Dayton. This is the main task all BiH's politicians should be concentrating on, and working on together.

HR in Gorazde today

The High Representative is in Gorazde today meeting with the Canton Prime Minister, Salko Obhodjas, and the Minister of Interior Nusret Sipovic. They will discuss the general situation in the Canton and specifically the importance of police reform.

I have brought along copies of the media advisory which you can collect after the press conference.