

OHR's statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference



Focus on Europe: Integration or isolation

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Miroslav Lajcak, will address a plenary session of BH Parliament on Thursday (6 September).

Other than BiH Parliamentarians, the High Representative and EU Special Representative has invited the members of the BiH Presidency, members of the BiH Council of Ministers, Entity Prime Ministers and the Speakers of Entity Parliaments.

All these institutions have a role in building BiH's future.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative will highlight that BiH faces a stark choice this Autumn: to continue down the road to the EU and play a role in the region or to isolate itself further from both.

The challenges posed by the Stabilisation and Association Process, Constitutional Reform, poverty and providing justice can only be effectively tackled if all the institutions of this country play a constructive role, and all sides show a readiness to compromise for the benefit of the country as a whole and all of its citizens.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative will

underline that there is no longer any room for the politics of confrontation and delay.

The High Representative/EU Special Representative will address Parliament at 10.00 on Thursday 6 September. He will then take questions from Parliamentarians. Representatives of the media are invited to attend throughout.

OHR/EUSR calls for quick ratification of CEFTA

The BiH House of Representatives will debate the ratification of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) tomorrow.

When Bosnia and Herzegovina negotiated and signed CEFTA in December 2006, it showed its commitment to economic development and regional cooperation in south-eastern Europe.

Parliament must now honour this commitment and ratify the Agreement.

The Parliament has already postponed its ratification twice. Any further delay would undermine the credibility of the government and Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an international trade partner.

That would leave BiH on the sidelines on 28 September when Ministers gather in Ohrid for the First Ministerial Meeting of the Joint Committee of CEFTA.

CEFTA will boost trade and attract investments; it simplifies trade among the countries of region and provides its Members with a clear framework for the development of domestic industries. It implements common rules on antidumping, safeguards and provides an efficient arbitration system in case of disputes.

BiH farmers have been vocal about their concerns and deserve more attention from Governments and Parliaments. However,

delaying the CEFTA ratification will not help farmers to increase their competitiveness.

A first concrete step to help farmers is the adoption of the Agricultural Law, which is currently before the State Parliament.

Failure by Parliament to ratify CEFTA would also further delay the development of a functioning market economy, which is a key requirement for European integration.