

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference

There will be consequences

Before I go on to other matters, I would just like to make the following points: a senior BiH official is quoted today as saying there will be no consequences if BiH does not get in to PfP at the end of this month. He could not be more wrong. PfP membership and integration into NATO provides the best guarantee of long-term peace and stability for BiH: its importance for BiH should not be underestimated, least of all by senior BiH officials. Moreover, if BiH is unable to get into PfP because the RS fails to uphold BiH's international obligations, then that is a very serious situation and will have to be addressed. BiH cannot be held hostage by the failures of the RS. Those most responsible in the RS leadership will have to be held to account. Measures will need to be taken to ensure that the RS remains focused on meeting its responsibilities until they have detained those indicted by ICTY and handed them to The Hague. And last but not least, BiH will need to strengthen the institutions at the state level that will help ensure that the country is able to meet its international obligations towards the ICTY.

RS must deliver results not excuses

PDHR Don Hays and ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte discussed all these issues at their meeting this morning. They agreed that the time for excuses was over, and that the RS would be judged by results, and particularly, by arrests. They also agreed that the attempt by some in the SDS to shift responsibility for the RS's failures on to the international community showed that those people were not taking their responsibilities seriously. Only the relevant BiH institutions, in this case the RS authorities, can demonstrate that BiH is determined to uphold its international obligations towards ICTY. The international community

cannot do that for the RS.

Irresponsible manipulation

The OHR does not intend to comment on each and every event in Stolac. But what has been going on is clear: some people are manipulating the Stolac issue to stir up nationalist feelings in advance of the forthcoming municipal elections. The citizens of Stolac deserve better from their leaders and political parties. The SDA, the HDZ and the other major political parties represented in Stolac will want to do all they can to show responsibility and leadership, and prove that they have no intention of exploiting the suffering of the citizens of Stolac for cynical political advantage. If the SDA and the HDZ and other parties want to show they have moved from the political of competitive victimisation to the politics of tolerance and European intergration, they can demonstrate it in Stolac.

Sanctions if laws not harmonised with the State

There has been some speculation in the media today that the OHR agrees that the Cantonal education laws are already harmonised with the State Law. That is true in some cantons. But it is not true in others. This is a Rule of Law issue. Cantonal laws have to be in line with the relevant state legislation. If Cantons refuse to do that, they are challenging the authority of the State. Those political parties that fail to bring their cantonal education legislation in line with the State by Friday will face sanctions. These will escalate every week until the parties themselves decide that the price they are paying for challenging the authority of the state is not worth it.