

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

High Representative in Washington New York for Consultations with US Officials, World Bank, UN

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown is in the United States. The thrust of the High Representatives discussions, in Washington and New York, will cover the current status of BiH's efforts to secure admittance to PfP and to begin negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. The talks will cover measures to unblock the impasse created by inadequate cooperation offered by BiH to the ICTY.

Yesterday the High Representative had a meeting with US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, during which they discussed reform in the BiH security sector. The High Representative briefed the Defence Secretary on defence, police and intelligence reforms that will allow BiH to address global security challenges.

Today the High Representative will speak at a seminar organized by the US Institute for Peace and he will also hold talks with senior US administration officials. The High Representative will meet US Ambassador for War Crimes Pierre Prosper tomorrow, after which he will have a meeting with the President of the World Bank James Wolfensohn. On Thursday, the High Representative will address the UN Security Council and hold talks with UN Secretary General Kofi Anan and Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guehenno. We will provide more information about these meeting as and when we have it.

Federation HoR Urged to Safeguard Citizens' Money

The Law on the Investment of Public Moneys is now before the Federation House of Peoples. It has already been adopted by the House of Representatives. This law is the remaining piece of legislation in a package of measures to which the three prime ministers committed themselves at the end of last year in the wake of revelations of widespread abuses, in the Special Auditor's reports into public companies.

The Law on Public Moneys is designed to ensure that the kind of reckless or criminal misuse of public funds that we saw, for example in the Privredna Banka Srpsko Sarajevo case, is effectively prevented. For example, the law would have prevented the city of Bijeljina from depositing 2.2 million KM into the Bank.

The RSNA has already passed a Law on Public Moneys. It now remains for the Federation House of Peoples to debate this legislation. OHR urges that the law be considered at the next session of the House, on 23/24 November, and that the House of Peoples consider a small number of amendments to the law made by the House of Representatives, so as to avoid a lengthy harmonization process.

The sooner this law is enacted, the sooner citizens will be protected from dishonest manipulation of their money by unscrupulous or incompetent public officials.

Initiative to Establish BiH Ministry for Agriculture

BiH Prime Minister Adnan Terzic, EC Head of Delegation Michael Humphreys and PDHR Donald Hays will open a major conference on BiH Agriculture in Sarajevo tomorrow. The Conference will discuss the findings of a functional review of the farm sector carried out by the EC. This highlights the legal and administrative deficiencies that currently prevent BiH farmers

from expanding production, marketing their produce effectively in BiH and abroad, and creating new jobs in the countryside. It is clear that the creation of a state Ministry for Agriculture could address most of these deficiencies. The farming sector's capacity to produce cheap and plentiful food for domestic and international consumption is unnecessarily diminished by overlapping and often contradictory legislation and by cumbersome bureaucracy – the conference will address the political and administrative steps that have to be taken to fix this unnecessarily unsatisfactory state of affairs.