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

High Representative doesn’t accept further delays

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, wrote today to Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Adnan Terzic, urging him and the Council to put in parliamentary procedure, without any further delays, the Draft Law on Intelligence and Security Agency.

It has been more then two months since the Intelligence Reform Commission, lead by Hungarian Intelligence Expert Kalman Kocsis, submitted the Draft to the Council of Ministers. De-politicized Agency under democratic Parliamentary control was supposed to begin its work as of January 1, 2004, but because of politically driven amendments BiH can’t demonstrate its readiness to join Europe in fight against international terrorism, organized crime and human trafficking.

The HR believes that security must now be top of BiH’s agenda. BiH needs to show a new seriousness on security issues, and the first test of that new seriousness is the intelligence law. If the CoM cannot pass the law into parliament by 15 December, the HR has told Mr Terzic that this would be a grave indictment of the Council of Ministers and their willingness to take national security seriously.

In addition, he called on CoM to establish a Working Group to work with the international community on the practical elements of the Agency’s establishment, including supervising the practical arrangements for transferring responsibilities, personnel and property from the existing intelligence services to the new Intelligence Agency as soon as the new law is in place.

Any further delay now will seriously endanger our chances of getting the new service fully operational early in the New Year. "Such a failure would serve only to convince the international community that BiH does not have the institutional capacity for Euro-Atlantic integration nor for the fight against terrorism", the High Representative said in the letter.

High Representative Outlines Work Program for 2004

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will tomorrow give a keynote address at a conference organised by the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation entitled the "Road to Europe – the next steps".

The High Representative will say that Bosnia and Herzegovina now has the opportunity to move decisively from the post conflict era to the pre-accession era – from the era of Dayton to the era of Brussels. Sixteen milestones mark the path from one to the other; the sixteen requirements laid down by the EU last month. The EU and NATO have shown they are serious about BiH as a potential member; BiH has the next six months to show it is serious about becoming a member. In June, NATO will meet in Istanbul to consider BiH's progress; at the end of June, the European Commission will consider whether BiH is ready to start negotiations for a Stability and Association Agreement. Europe has offered its hand to BiH; BiH must now reach out and grasp the opportunity.

The High Representative will outline the importance of BiH's success on this road, which will be the driving force of his activities and focus, just as much as that of the BiH and Entity Governments; BiH can not afford to let this opportunity slip.

The Forum will start at 11.00 tomorrow, 3 December, in the Amphitheatre of the UNITIC Business Centre with the High Representative's speech due to run between 11.15 and 12.00. A question and answer session is planned for between 12.00 and

12.30 and journalists will be able to attend throughout. More details are available from the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation.