

Parliament Must Show It Is Not Captured By Vested Interest

Principle Deputy High Representative (PDHR) Lawrence Butler met with BiH Minister for Civil Affairs, Safet Halilovic (SBiH) today in Sarajevo. They discussed the Law on Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices prior to the tomorrow's session of the BiH House of Representatives. Minister Safet Halilovic, as Minister for Civil Affairs, is the formal proponent of this legislation.

"Even though the benefits of this law for domestic manufacturers and consumers are clear there remains confused resistance in Parliament to this legislation" said PDHR Butler. "Were this law to fail I fear that in investors minds it would only confirm the recent World Bank survey which has found reform in BiH particularly susceptible to lobbying from powerful vested interest looking to protect their market. Clearly these lobbies put their own financial interests above the good – and in this case the health – of BiH's citizens," he said.

A recently released World Bank survey on corruption in twenty-nine transition countries places BiH highest on their "Captured State index" which refers to undue influence in the law-making process. The report says privileged insiders influence the Parliamentary decision-making process, thereby undermining reform legislation – despite its clear advantages.

"This is damaging for BiH and can have a negative effect on potential foreign investors," said PDHR Butler. "The best way for BiH Parliament to counteract this is to show, through the adoption of the EU standardised legislation, that BiH Parliament is not held hostage by vested interest, but acts to

balance business and its citizens interests.

At what is likely to be the last session of the BiH House of Representatives in this composition Parliamentarians will tomorrow discuss the Law on Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices. This legislation aims to make medicines safer and cheaper. It should guarantee access to higher-quality medicines by establishing uniform conditions for the manufacturing, testing and sale of pharmaceuticals and measures to ensure their quality, safety and efficiency. The Law will bring benefits to the state itself by establishing a single pharmaceuticals market, supervision over it, establishing a State regulator, and preventing unfair competition.