

PDHR Hays Urges Immediate Government Action on Civil Aviation

Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays has sent a letter to Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers Dragan Mikerevic and Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations Azra Hadziahmetovic, drawing their attention to the recent failure of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly to consider the Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Civil Aviation.

“It is now clear that the orderly turnover of the management of the Sarajevo International Airport (SIA) from SFOR to the domestic authorities is in jeopardy,” Ambassador Hays wrote. “Any further delay in taking the necessary steps to prepare for the imminent departure of the French Military Air detachment will have grave consequences, not the least of which is the possibility of the closure of the civilian side of the airport to commercial traffic in January 2003. “

In his letter, the Principal Deputy High Representative alerted Minister Mikerevic and Minister Hadziametovic to steps which must now be taken if BiH is to avoid the closure of Sarajevo Airport to commercial traffic next year, after the French military personnel leave. The French detachment is scheduled to begin gradual withdrawing next month.

An amendment to the Civil Aviation Law must be adopted immediately so as to provide for the appointment of a successor to the EC/ICAO Project Coordinator of the BiH Department of Civil Aviation. This amendment will replace the three existing Directors General with a structure in which the BiH DCA is managed by a single Director General and two Deputy Directors.

In order to avoid any further delay, Ambassador Hays urged the two Ministers to consult with the Speakers of both houses of parliament in order to ensure that the amendments are passed immediately, through an extraordinary session if necessary.

International civil aviation rules require the appointment of a general manager at every international airport. Yet, the mandate of the Sarajevo Airport general manager expired at the end of March 2002. His official re-appointment is required by 1 July 2002 to ensure continued competent management.

As SFOR will be taking the terminal approach radar currently in use at Sarajevo Airport with them when they leave, the formal call for tender for a replacement radar system needs to be announced as soon as possible.

Search and Rescue over the territory of BiH will remain SFOR's responsibility only until September 2002. By then, BiH staff must be trained in order to take over the running of the BiH Rescue Coordination Center (RCC).

"Any further delays will have a significant economic impact on this country and its international reputation," PDHR Hays wrote. "I urge you to see to it that the above items receive the attention that they require in order to reassure all interested national and international parties that the administration of BiH air space will be able to continue without incident or interruption."