

Statement: High Representative emphasizes crucial importance of Police Reform

Following the letter written by EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn to BiH Prime Minister Adnan Terzic emphasizing the crucial importance of successful police reform for BiH's EU accession process, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, today reiterated the fact that "a key component of BiH's efforts to prepare for the negotiation of a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU is to have a police service that can tackle crime effectively. This must be organized in accordance with best European practice and on the basis of professional, not political, considerations."

The High Representative emphasized three points. Firstly, all budgetary competencies must be vested at the state level; secondly, police reform can only proceed on the basis of geographical regions that have been drawn up to ensure maximum efficiency (including fast response times); and thirdly, overt political interference in policing must be eliminated.

"These three principles must apply if BiH is to meet the EU's requirements," the High Representative said. "Equally important, these three principles will help to guarantee the citizens of this country the high standard of professional policing that they are entitled to expect and that they have been denied for so long. In the end, it's about making BiH a safer place to live."