

“The Eyes of Europe and the World Are on BiH”

The next few days, even hours, will be crucial for BiH's future. The eyes of Europe and the world are on BiH as its leaders decide whether to seize the opportunity to take the first historic steps into NATO and European security structures.

Today all the EU Ambassadors are meeting the BiH Presidency to urge them not to miss this opportunity to put BiH's armed forces under state control, and put all its soldiers in one uniform, and march them towards NATO. Tomorrow, the Political Directors of the Peace Implementation Council are coming to Sarajevo to be briefed on the defence reforms, and the other reform processes underway. NATO's Military Committee, made up of some of the most senior military officers from NATO's 19 members, is also arriving in BiH tomorrow and will be briefed on the defence reform process.

The Peace Implementation Council will be meeting on Thursday and Friday. They will be assessing whether BiH's political leaders are prepared to show the political maturity and statesmanship to support the reforms necessary to take this country into transatlantic structures. They will receive briefings from the chairs of each of the three Commissions on progress in the Customs/VAT, defence and intelligence reforms.

The High Representative passionately believes that membership of first PfP and then NATO offers BiH the best guarantee of long-term peace and stability. He will tell the PIC that it would be a tragedy if BiH rejected this historic opportunity to give the citizens of this country a peaceful future.

But he will underline that the choice lies in the hands of

BiH's political leaders. NATO is looking to the BiH authorities to do this themselves. He will tell the PIC that these defence reforms, and after them the ITA and intelligence reforms, represent the greatest test of BiH's international credibility since he became High Representative.