

# High Representative Addresses Council of Europe

Faster implementation of Council of Europe post-accession requirements will deliver tangible benefits to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, said at the Council of Europe on Tuesday. "For all BiH's progress, much remains to be done to achieve European standards in the areas monitored by the Council of Europe," the High Representative told the Monitoring Committee of the CoE Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg. "Failure to speed up progress will deprive BiH citizens of essential rights, and would mean stalled progress for BiH on the way towards European integration. What has been lacking so far is a convincing, sustained effort by the new governments and parliaments in pushing for the adoption, ratification and implementation of key conventions and legislation as identified by the CoE. We must now ensure that the BiH authorities speed up significantly their compliance."

The High Representative said the Justice and Jobs agenda – promoting the Rule of Law and a creating an economy that generates jobs – together with key reforms such as the introduction of a single customs administration and countrywide VAT and Customs, offer the authorities a clear plan of action for integrating BiH in Europe and improving the quality of citizens' lives.

"CoE monitoring is a key safeguard in ensuring that BiH moves in the right direction" he said.

The High Representative also reported on the process of government formation. "The composition of the new state government reflects the expanded and strengthened Council of Ministers structure that came into effect following 5 weeks'

negotiations between the parties, facilitated by OHR," he said. He pointed out that the new RS government "represents the first multi-ethnic government in the RS and conforms to the 2002 constitutional changes."

Summing up, the High Representative warned that the International Community "must avoid any temptation to do the governments' work for them, but instead encourage the prime ministers to pull their diverse administrations together behind the reform agenda."

While in Strasbourg, the High Representative also met Council of Europe Secretary General Walter Schwimmer, CoE Director-General of Political Affairs Klaus Schumann, and the Committee of Ministers' Group of Rapporteurs on Democratic Stability, which is responsible for facilitating the detailed implementation of post-accession criteria.