

High Representative Issues Decision on Collective/Transit Centres

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, on Friday issued a Decision requiring the domestic authorities to take steps to ensure that all collective centres and transit centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina are used as both alternative and emergency accommodation.

This resource is greatly needed in order to fulfil the requirements of the property laws, and the laws on displaced persons and refugees. There is an urgent need to provide for those who would otherwise risk becoming homeless upon leaving claimed property. Therefore as many facilities as possible should be devoted to this resource, in accordance with the property laws. These laws require that not only all levels of government provide alternative accommodation, but also socially owned firms. As one of the largest potential resources for such accommodation, collective centres must remain open and be converted into alternative and emergency accommodation.

The Decision prescribes that the Ministries in charge of these facilities cooperate with the UNHCR in creating a plan for the rationalisation of the available space in these centres. The plan will promote the return of vulnerable BiH refugees and displaced persons to their homes, who are currently living in collective or transit accommodation in BiH or in neighboring countries, and whose property claims remain unresolved.

Under this Plan, the competent ministries are required to offer available collective centre space, as alternative accommodation, to current occupants of contested space in either a facility within their Canton or region, as close as

is feasible to their municipality of current residence, or , if the current occupant so chooses, in a facility as close as is feasible to his or her municipality of original residence as of 30 April 1991.

The Plan, including a complete and final list of refugees and DPs, shall be made available prior to its implementation to the members of the State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons and to the Reconstruction and Return Task Force. The list shall include details of the space these persons occupy in their current facility of residence, the location of their claimed property, available details concerning the current occupants of the claimed property, and any other information necessary to implement this Plan. Periodic progress reports shall be made available to the members of the State Commission for Refugees and Displaced Persons and to the Reconstruction and Return Task Force.