

PIC Steering Board Press Communique: Broadcast Media Statement

At today's meeting in Sarajevo of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council, it was agreed that the Parties must urgently create the necessary conditions for the conduct of free and fair elections with respect to equitable access to the media for all political parties and candidates. In view of the election timetable, it is essential that the appropriate Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation and Republika Srpska authorities immediately begin fulfilling their obligations, under the General Framework Agreement for Peace, in relation to the media, freedom of expression and of the press, and freedom of movement.

In light of the influence and dominance of television in the former Yugoslavia, this medium should be given priority. The same principles must, however, also apply to the print media.

I

The appropriate authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation and Republika Srpska and their respective state broadcasters must ensure that all political parties and election candidates are given fair access to the state media. Principally, they must take immediate steps to improve access for opposition parties and candidates on all aspects of news and current affairs programming.

The Media Experts Commission established by the Provisional Election Commission will carefully monitor the media and the quality and substance of news reporting as well as the performance of the media in providing equitable access for all political parties and election candidates.

In this context, the project for setting up a second, independent TV network must not be made conditional on any extraneous factors. A formal application for the use of the second network will be submitted to the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina before the end of April and it is expected that this would be approved early in May.

All interested journalists, programme producers and broadcasters must be given the opportunity to take part in the work of this network. The full transmission of its programming must be permitted throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, in both entities. The appropriate authorities must ensure that licences and frequencies for electronic and print media are granted promptly and on a non-political basis.

II

The authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federation and Republika Srpska are fully aware of their obligations, and will be held accountable. In the event that any of the Parties fails to meet its obligations, alternative means will be pursued to ensure free and fair media access. A step being considered would be for IFOR, in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement, to requisition for their own use the necessary frequencies to allow programming from affiliate stations to be received by citizens in both entities. <!-- {endoc}