

RS authorities report on steps taken to prosecute corrupt officials

Today at the OHR in Banja Luka, Manfred Dauster, Head of the OHR Anti-Fraud Department, hosted a meeting attended by representatives of international organizations and the RS Supreme Audit Institution, the RS Public Prosecutor, the RS Ministry of the Interior, the RS Financial Police and the RS Banking Agency. The object of the meeting was to assess the work done since October 10, 2001, when international and domestic agencies engaged in the fight against corruption met in Banja Luka to discuss the steps to be taken in light of the comprehensive audit carried out by the Supreme Audit Institution in cooperation with the OHR and OSCE earlier this year. The audit uncovered serious shortcomings in the RS public accounting system, including 31 individual instances of serious corruption. Five charges have so far been filed with the Banja Luka Basic Public Prosecutor's Office against former and serving officials of the RS government. These five cases concern a total sum of around 300,000 KM which has been misappropriated from the RS budget. Two other criminal charges are now being prepared. These will be filed in the near future.

OHR expressed its appreciation to the RS officials at the meeting for their efforts up until now. However, concerns were also raised about the slowness and limited scope of proceedings against those believed to be responsible for embezzling public funds. The five charges which have been filed with the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office represent the coordinated effort of all the RS institutions in the last six weeks. A further meeting is scheduled for February, at which time OHR hopes there will be more results.