High Representative visits Bijeljina: Full engagement required to eradicate discrimination

High Representative Christian Schmidt visited Bijeljina on Tuesday, where he met with representatives of the local community to learn about the socio-economic outlook of this part of BiH, as well as the needs and challenges of the local population, in particular displaced persons, returnees and persons from vulnerable groups.

The High Representative visited the “Five Lakes” residential settlement, originally built as a temporary alternative accommodation. In a meeting with local residents, the High Representative inquired about living conditions and challenges faced by residents of this community. The meeting was also attended by Bijeljina Mayor Ljubiša Petrović.

High Representative Schmidt expressed hope that relevant authorities will swiftly resolve any legal concerns so that residents can regulate their ownership rights in compliance with the relevant legal framework. “The needs of the people need to be placed above any other in order to reach a legally sound solution,” said the High Representative, adding that he will continue to monitor developments regarding this issue.

In a meeting with the Chief Imam and the President of the

Bijeljina Majlis of the Islamic Community, Samir Camić and Emir Musli, the High Representative was briefed about the position of Bosniak community in Bijeljina, their key issues and problems, and relations with the local authorities. HR Schmidt underscored the important role religious communities have in promoting peaceful coexistence, cooperation, and prosperity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During his visit, the High Representative also met with Dragan Joković and Radmila Tubić, representatives of the NGO Centre for Integration and Inclusion of Roma Population "Otaharin." They informed the HR about the NGO's activities on addressing the key issues underlying the low level of inclusion of the Roma community: poverty, housing, and prejudice.

In his meetings, the High Representative emphasized the need for implementing all aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement, in particular those referring to non-discrimination and the right to return as guaranteed under Annex VII. "This will require full engagement of all segments of society – the authorities, NGOs, media, and religious communities. The end result will be a progressive and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina enjoyed by all who live here," concluded the High Representative.