

2nd Federation Meeting on the Central Bosnia Canton, 27 August 1997

Second Federation Meeting on the Central Bosnia Canton

On 27 August, Federation President Soljic, Vice-President Ganic, Minister for Refugees Kadic and his deputy Ljubic, Minister of Interior Zilic and his deputy Leutar met with the Governor of the Central Bosnia Canton Saric, his Deputy Terzic and other Canton officials to discuss the situation in the Canton. The meeting was chaired by the Senior Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Wagner. Federation Ombudsmen Raguz, Jovanovic and Muhibic were present, as were COSSFOR Widder, UNHCR Acting Special Envoy Rene van Rooyen, OSCE Deputy Head of Mission Jenness, Deputy to UN SRSG Barber and Deputy Police Commissioner Schumm.

Recalling the agreement of 5 August, the participants reviewed measures that have been taken to facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes in the Central Bosnia Canton in a safe manner. The Office of the High Representative and the International Community welcomed efforts by the Federation leadership to resolve return problems Federation wide and expressed their readiness to support these efforts.

The meeting welcomed developments in the area of returns within the Canton. Returns to villages around Jajce proceeded according to schedule as finalised by the working group on returns to Central Bosnia. Between 16 and 21 August, a total of 435 heads of households returned to the villages of Kruscica, Lendici, Bucici, Divicani, and Gornja and Donja Sibenica. Returns have also taken place to Guca Gora in the municipality of Travnik, and return plans were put forth by the municipalities of Bugojno and Vitez.

Regarding security and crime, four suspects have been arrested for home destruction in Bugojno. The participants noted this as a positive step that must now be followed up with proper legal proceedings, which will be monitored by human rights observers.

The participants deplored the mine incidents that occurred in connection with returns to the villages of Divicani, where two mine injuries were incurred on 20 August, and in Lendici, where another victim was injured on 22 August. Immediate and thorough investigations are needed to clarify whether these were newly planted mines as the evidence suggests. If this is the case, arrests and prosecutions of perpetrators must be conducted without delay.

The agreed working group on Central Bosnia returns, under the JCC Sub-Commission for Refugees, was established on 11 August in Travnik. UNHCR, as chair of the working group, and the Cantonal Ministry for Social Welfare, Displaced Persons and Refugees reported to the meeting on its work. The working group has defined the first phase in the returns process as comprising the return of refugees and displaced persons to their uninhabited pre-war houses, and has requested all of the municipalities within the Canton to provide operative plans for such return. The first phase should begin straight away, and to speed up its progress and to reach a complete plan for returns throughout the Canton, the participants decided the following:

1. The Cantonal Ministry will collect inputs from all municipalities by 28 August, and will finalise the overall return plan for the Canton by 10 September.
2. Cantonal authorities will task the municipalities to establish joint commissions by 1 September to survey all of the pre-war houses and apartments of refugees and displaced persons. This survey will include information on whether the house or apartment is inhabited or uninhabited, and if damaged, an estimate of the level of damage, and should be concluded by 5 September.
3. The Cantonal Ministry for Social Welfare, Displaced Persons and Refugees will request municipalities to provide data on the registration of returnees as residents, as well as the movement of displaced persons out of the municipality. For this purpose, municipalities will be asked to establish returnee information centres within their social services, also by 10

September.

4. Cantonal authorities, in consultation with UNHCR, will be responsible for preparing a plan for surveying return areas for mines with the regional UN Mine Action Centre as soon as the return plan is finalised.

The participants further agreed that authorities in the Federation and in the Canton should seek to jointly allocate funding available for housing reconstruction, infrastructure and social infrastructure projects to assist returnees. The Federation President and Vice-President will appeal to donors for additional funding, especially calling on donor agencies to make flexible and rapid funding available to follow return movements. The Office of the High Representative and UNHCR will support this appeal. The OHR has recommended to the German and Austrian governments to go ahead with suspended bilateral projects in Jajce and welcomes their decision to do so.

The Canton authorities will ensure that they meet their commitments made on 5 August to establish a fully operational Joint Canton Police force by 30 August. Commission for the Implementation of the Federation Police will by the 28 August solve unresolved issues regarding senior positions within three police administrations and the area of responsibility of one police station.

The participants look forward to the impending publication of the IPTF report on the policing response to the incidents in Jajce, and expect the Canton authorities to implement the recommendations of the report in full.

Federation Ombudsmen Branka Raguz and Esad Muhibic provided an update on the opening of the regional office of the Federation Ombudsmen in Travnik. Cantonal authorities, Ombudsmen and OSCE will report on a permanent solution by 10 September.

The participants decided to meet again in two weeks time to review progress.

Office of the High Representative