

Federation Forum, Chairman's Conclusions, 20 August 1997

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On 20 August 1997, the Federation leadership met at a session of the Federation Forum in Sarajevo to discuss ways and means to further strengthen and implement the Federation. The meeting was co-chaired by Chief of US Mission, Robert M. Beecroft, and the Senior Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Gerd Wagner. The following was agreed:

Police and Legal System

2. Participants reconfirmed their commitment to honor previous agreements regarding the establishment of the joint police in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and to complete the process in all municipalities by August 22. Participants also reconfirmed the agreement of 5 August on the establishment of the police in the Central Bosnia Canton and committed themselves to have it fully integrated and restructured by 22 August. The canton authorities will ensure that municipalities will assist police personnel who presently reside in another municipality to find temporary housing.
3. Participants recognized that joint police structures in the Cantons with a Special Regime must be joined by integrated legal structures in order to be fully effective. They agreed to turn their immediate attention to this urgent issue, and to take concrete steps to ensure the formation of integrated legal structures in both Cantons on an expedited basis.
4. All police within the Federation will be integrated and restructured by 9 September. Any official who obstructs implementation will be held accountable.

Return , Human Rights and Property Legislation

5. Participants welcomed the ongoing process of return of refugees and displaced persons in the Central Bosnia Canton, in particular in Jajce, as decided in the Federation meeting of 5 August chaired by OHR. They reaffirmed their commitment to formulate and adopt by 25 August a program for the return of all refugees and displaced persons in the Central Bosnia Canton. This plan will be reaffirmed at the JCC Working Group Meeting chaired by UNHCR on 25 August. In this context, another Federation meeting reconvening the participants of the 5 August meeting will be on 27 August. Participants called on the international community to provide assistance to the returnees.
6. Participants condemned the recent assaults on returnees in Bugojno and Stolac on 16 August, and emphasized that such incidents will not undermine their efforts to foster the return process. They called on the municipal authorities and the police to investigate such incidents thoroughly, publicly release their findings by September 1 and prosecute the perpetrators.
7. Participants affirmed their regret over the violent demonstrations by and manipulations of vulnerable displaced persons for the purpose of preventing Serb return to Vogosca. Participants agreed to call on municipal authorities and police to conduct a thorough investigation into the events leading up to demonstrations against returns to Vogosca. The findings of this investigation will be released by 1 September. Based on the findings of the investigation, we expect all responsible authorities to exercise the full power of their offices to prevent future violent demonstrations from occurring.

8. The President and the Vice-President of the Federation personally committed themselves to make every effort to resolve problems with which returnees are confronted. For this purpose, they will jointly and regularly visit municipalities which are experiencing difficulties with return, to promote the return of refugees and displaced persons throughout the Federation and to remind municipal officials, also with disciplinary measures, of their obligations under Annex 7 of the Peace Agreement.
9. The Federation Ombudsmen reminded the Forum of their reports on issues related to the exercise of return.
10. Participants welcomed that in accordance with the agreement of 5 August, the Federation Ombudsmen have been provided with premises in Travnik and will start their work in this city on 25 August.
11. On 10 July 1996, Federation authorities stated their commitment to urgent revision of existing property laws to comply with the Peace Agreement and eliminate obstacles to return. At Sintra, the PIC Steering Board reiterated that this as yet unmet demand must be fulfilled, and stated that "international support for housing reconstruction should be conditional upon the fulfilment of these obligations". On 6 August 1997 in Split, President Izetbegovic responded by making a concrete commitment that property legislation in the Federation will meet these obligations by 30 September 1997.

Participants will fulfil this commitment by ensuring that the Federation Parliament considers and adopts the three draft laws prepared by the OHR on this subject, which include:

- The Law on the Cessation of the Application of the Law on Abandoned Apartments;
- The Law Regulating the Application of the Law on Temporary Abandoned Real Property Owned by Citizens; and
- The Law on Amendments to the Law on Housing Relations.

The Participants will also ensure that local authorities comply with the new laws once adopted, and that all returnees are able to return to their pre-war homes as guaranteed by [Annex 7](#) of the Peace Agreement.

Municipalities

12. Participants took note of the determination of the international community to insist that the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Assembly adopt the amendment to the Canton Constitution in line with the Interim Statute of Mostar and the 6 June Agreement. OHR and U.S.Embassy will hold talks with HDZ representatives of the Canton on 21 August to review the agreed amendments and to consider whether any change to the agreed text would be in line with the Interim Statute and the 6 June Agreement. The Co-Chairmen warned participants that failure to adopt the amendments by 1 September will result in political and economic consequences for those who block the amendments. They called on Canton officials to withdraw their complaint to the Federation Constitutional Court.
13. Participants decided that in accordance with the 6 June Agreement, the amendments to the Sarajevo Canton Constitution regarding Sarajevo will now be adopted and the City be established immediately thereafter.
14. Participants discussed the outstanding issue in the Draft Law on Split and New Municipalities. The Co-Chairmen insist that the competent authorities should define the boundary of the new Municipality of Usora by 1 September.

Other Federation issues

15. Participants discussed the housing situation of Federation officials in ministries in Sarajevo and Mostar. They committed themselves that the four ministries in Mostar will be functional with participation of all officials from both Federation partners by 1 September.
16. Federation partners reconfirmed that the Federation flag must be displayed at every public building in the Federation in accordance with the Law. The President and the Vice-President of the Federation as well as the Prime Minister committed themselves personally that the cantonal and municipal authorities in the Federation will comply with this obligation still this month.

Office of the High Representative