

Education Reform: Children Should Come First



Attending today's ministerial conference on Education, the OSCE Mission to BiH, the Council of Europe, the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNHCR, UNICEF and the OHR called on competent authorities at all levels to start delivering the positive changes that are necessary to ensure every child's right to education is fully respected. Recent events in Konjevic Polje (Bratunac) and Vrbanjci (Kotor Varos) have illustrated the need to deal with these issues as a matter of urgency.

The Ministers' condemnation of all forms of discrimination, segregation, assimilation, and politicization is welcome, but the time for mere statements is past and each Minister must recognize their own urgent responsibility to act to ensure this basic right is met in a manner that is non-discriminatory and inclusive.

The discrimination and segregation that prevail today have also become an impediment to raising the quality of education. A change of approach is essential and it must be matched by a renewed commitment to meeting basic standards and obligations in the education sector. Simply put, children need to be put first.

Precisely for this reason, we urge the Conference of Ministers of Education to find a mechanism for developing durable long-term solutions in education. We remind BiH that it has to fulfill its obligations under international human rights law, as well as under the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

In addition, the education chapter of the Revised Strategy for Implementation of Annex VII, adopted by the BiH Parliamentary Assembly in 2010, provides a useful framework by identifying problems and detailing specific recommendations to be implemented.

Words must be translated into action, and for this reason we expect to see concrete and measurable progress being made in the coming period that will deliver positive change in classrooms across the country. The international community stands ready to provide political and technical support to the education authorities in developing durable, long-term solutions in education.