

OHR's Statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference in Banja Luka

Social and Economic Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina by End 2007

This afternoon in Sarajevo, the Office of the High Representative will host a meeting between Jan Furstenborg, the Head of Commerce at Union Network International, Antonio Penalosa, Secretary-General of the International Organisation of Employers, Alija Remzo Baksic, Director of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Employers' Association, and Edhem Biber, President of the Trade Union Confederation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Representatives of other organisations, including the European Commission, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the EU Special Representative and several foundations, will also participate in the meeting.

Mr Furstenborg and Mr Pelosa are the senior negotiators of the Global Social Dialogue in Commerce. In addition, Mr Furstenborg is a negotiator of the European Social Dialogue in Commerce chaired by the European Commission in Brussels, and has been involved in facilitating the establishment and effective operation of dialogue among social partners in the commerce sector in all the countries that became EU members during the last two rounds of enlargement.

As you know, work has been underway for several years to establish a Social and Economic Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina that will bring together workers, employers and political leaders in a constructive and practical tripartite dialogue. In other countries this has been a key element in setting up constructive and stable labour relations which can be a driving force for social and economic reform and can thus help to sustain economic growth. Enshrined in the Treaty establishing the European Community, the social partnership model has already been adopted across the European Union and institutionalised as the European Social Dialogue.

The OHR hopes that a functioning Social and Economic Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina can be established before the end of 2007.