

## **HR meets Patriarch Pavle and the Holy Synod**

The HR met this morning with Patriarch Pavle and the Holy Synod of Bishops in Belgrade.

Following the meeting, the HR said that this was a useful discussion. He emphasized his belief that the recent improved atmosphere of constructive engagement on ICTY in Republika Srpska and Serbia and Montenegro mean that both countries can now look forward with greater confidence on making progress towards EU and NATO membership. He said that the Orthodox Church has a moral responsibility to support justice and the transfer of ICTY indictees to The Hague .

The HR said that the Synod of Churches has an important role to play, not only as a voice for the Serb people but also as a moral force which could encourage harmony and cooperation based on justice. "No one could deny the black deeds of the past, but it is important to recognize that guilt for those is individual and not collective," said the HR.

He welcomed the acknowledgement that the Patriarch made in relation to individual rather than collective guilt, and expressed the hope that the Orthodox Church will add its moral authority to supporting this commitment to build a new future based on cooperation with The Hague, equal rights for all, and European standards.

The HR heard from the Patriarch and from the Bishops of their concerns for the Serb people, especially Serb refugees. He reassured the Holy Synod that Republika Srpska – as one of BiH's two entities guaranteed by Dayton – should not feel threatened by police reform. "Police reform is not about abolishing the RS, but is one of the last major reform necessary in order for BiH to embark on the path of EU accession," said the HR.