

First Meeting of the Joint Executive Board of the BiH Special War Crimes Chamber Implementation Project

The BiH Minister of Justice, Slobodan Kovac, and the OHR's Senior Deputy High Representative in charge of the Rule of Law Pillar, Bernard Fassier, this afternoon co-chaired the first meeting of the Executive Board responsible for co-ordinating the efforts of the BiH authorities and the International Community in setting up the Court of BiH's Special War Crimes Chamber.

All the Board's members today stated their commitment to the establishment of the Special War Crimes Chamber and to participating in the multi-agency working groups. They reaffirmed their strong commitment to the implementation of the project and congratulated the ICTY, the OHR and the relevant BiH Authorities on their success in moving this project, supported by both the PIC Steering Board and the United Nations Security Council, forward.

Nine multi-agency working groups are looking at specific aspects of implementation; the renovation of premises for the Special Chamber, BiH's legal framework, a review of the cases to be prosecuted before the Court of BiH, staffing of the Special Chamber and its corresponding division within the BiH Prosecutor's Office, witness protection, the transfer of the ICTY's 'Rules of the Road' Unit functions to the BiH Prosecutor's Office, detention and prison facilities, trial monitoring and war crimes investigations. Today these working groups presented a comprehensive review of the progress made during their discussion this week.

This project builds on the progress made so far. The State Court is up and running and trying some of the most serious crimes committed in BiH; the new Criminal Codes and Procedures enable BiH Judges and Prosecutors to fight crime effectively; the restructuring of Courts ensures that justice is available to all, and the soon to be completed process of reappointing Judges and Prosecutors, being conducted by the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Councils, will ensure a professional and merit based judiciary. This Special Chamber should be operational by the start of 2005.

Represented on the Joint Executive Board are all the BiH Institutions and International Agencies that have a role in setting up the Special War Crimes Chamber within the Court of BiH. At today's meeting were: BiH Minister of Justice Slobodan Kovac, BiH Minister of Security Barisa Colak, BiH Treasury Minister, Ljerka Maric, President of the Court of BiH Martin Raguz, BiH Chief Prosecutor Marinko Jurcevic, Senior Deputy High Representative Bernard Fassier, ICTY President Ted Meron, EUPM Commissioner Sven Frederiksen, Special Representative of the Secretary General Council of the Council of Europe Sonja Moser-Starrach, DCOM SFOR, Brig. Simon Young and Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission in BiH Victor Tkachenko.