

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference

High Representative Visits Rudo

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, together with his wife Jane, stayed overnight with a pensioner in the village of Past in the hills above Rudo last night.

The High Representative learned first hand from this pensioner and subsistence farmer about the difficulties he and his wife face in trying to survive on a pension of 90 KM.

The High Representative also discussed with village residents the possibilities for expanding agricultural production and developing eco-tourism in the Rudo region. Unless the local economy is developed young people will continue to migrate elsewhere in search of work.

The High Representative and his wife also met Bosniak returnees to the area. At the top of the list of returnees' concerns are housing and securing basic utilities such as electricity. The High Representative emphasised that as international donor assistance for refugee return declines it is imperative that domestic institutions do more to meet the needs of returnees. This is particularly pertinent since the BiH authorities will take over the lead in the field of return at the end of this year.

The High Representative has made a conscious effort to continue visiting citizens in towns and villages all across BiH, despite a heavy work schedule at OHR in Sarajevo, because he believes that this is the most effective way of listening to the concerns and aspirations of citizens and ensuring that

the International Community and the domestic authorities promote reform priorities that will deliver material improvements in living standards to the people of BiH.

Pictures from this visit will be available from the OHR Press Office and on the OHR web site later this afternoon.

PDHR to visit BiH Confederation of Unions

The Principal Deputy High Representative, Don Hays, will attend a meeting tomorrow with the President of the BiH Trade Union Confederation, Edhem Biber, and representative's of the Confederation's 22 affiliate unions. The meeting will explore ways in which the unions can take a larger role in attracting investment to BiH – something that unions have successfully done in other countries – and ways in which unions can promote retraining programmes and career development schemes that will help workers exploit the possibilities of the emerging market economy. Ambassador Hays will also discuss the negative impact that the mismanagement of public companies has on workers. Companies that are badly managed or dishonestly managed cannot guarantee job security and cannot act as engines for economic development that will create more and more new jobs.

Tomorrow's meeting will begin at 11.00 at the union headquarters in Sarajevo and will conclude with a press statement by Mr Biber and Ambassador Hays at 12.15. Media are invited to cover the entire meeting.