OHR and OSCE Mission condemn efforts to prevent children from attending school in Maglaj

The OHR and the OSCE Mission deplore the fact that politics have interfered with the right of all children to a depoliticised, high-quality and modern education system in every part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Efforts by local political reactionaries to prevent almost 300 Croat children from attending school in Novi Seher in Maglaj are a direct challenge to existing education laws and the agreed Education Reform Strategy, one of whose principal goals is to "put an end to segregation and discrimination through education."

It is shocking that political disagreements have been intentionally allowed to escalate in front of children waiting for their first day of school. It should be obvious that classrooms are not the appropriate forum for the resolution of political issues, because the ultimate victims of such manipulations will be the children of this country.

It is welcome news that the parents of ten children decided to send them to the Novi Seher school this morning. In doing so, they are putting the interests of their children first. BiH officials must now follow that good example, by rejecting efforts by reactionaries to derail efforts to raise the quality and standard of the BiH education system.

The agreed Education Reform Strategy ensures that the cultural rights of all children will be respected in the classroom. Moreover, administrative unification has no effect on the

existing curriculum or language of instruction. The appointment of a common school director and school board, and the registration of schools as a single legal body, is a technical procedure. Those who depict it as a political or an ideological one are acting on the basis of agendas that have nothing to do with education, and everything to do with their own control and influence.

The municipal authorities must ensure that pupils of all ethnic backgrounds are welcomed at the Novi Seher school. The time has come to stop politicizing this matter.