

# **Deputy High Representative Jean-Pierre Bercot Welcomes Adoption of the Herzegovina- Neretva Canton Budget**

The Deputy High Representative and Head of OHR-South, Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot welcomes the adoption of the budget of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton for 2002 which was finally adopted by the Cantonal Assembly today in Mostar. This issue has been for a long time a stumbling block in the work of the Canton and has contributed to the delay in payment of salaries to the budget beneficiaries.

According to information that OHR received, this Cantonal budget is for the first time a budget which in many aspects breaks the separation of the budget along the ethnic lines in the payment system. It is not ideal but it is a starting point for further functioning of the Canton which is already heavily burdened with debts and various obligations. Addressing the members of the Cantonal Assembly after they adopted the budget, DHR Bercot said: "Today's decision was a vote for paid salaries through an improved budget – contrary to the endless political games reflecting in social breakdown. It is up to the Government to fully implement this budget now."

In his speech, Ambassador Bercot especially emphasized the need that Cantonal authorities urgently turn to the solving of the numerous burning issues in the Canton such as social problems, encouragement of investments, creation of new jobs, better collection of revenues, rationalization of expenditures, regulation of debts etc. Moreover, OHR continues to support the need for fully joint functioning of the Cantonal Government within common premises and with jointly employed staff members.