High Representative discusses Europeanisation and Streamlining at New York meetings

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, on Tuesday continued a series of high-level meetings in New York designed to sustain the engagement of foreign governments and international agencies in the Bosnia and Herzegovina peace process.

On Tuesday morning the High Representative met Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Pique. The High Representative attached particular importance to this meeting because Spain has been a longstanding partner in the BiH peace process and also because Spain will take over the Presidency of the European Union from Belgium in January. Mr Pique expressed detailed interest in the status of peace implementation in BiH.

The High Representative described the present situation, noting the progress which has been made in developing a constructive partnership between the OHR and the BiH political leadership at State and Entity level. He also drew attention to the breakthrough in returns, which began in 2000 and has been maintained this year.

The High Representative described the measures which have been taken to resist Croat separatism and at the same time to protect the interest of the BiH Croats as the smallest of the constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, the High Representative expressed his concern with the pattern of obstructionism displayed by Serb representatives in

the BiH State institutions. He reiterated his conviction that the arrest and transfer to The Hague of Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic will at last allow the RS, and BiH as a whole, to move forward in a decisive and positive way. He added that political changes during the last year in Croatia and Yugoslavia have made this and other positive developments in BiH more likely.

Mr Pique commended the High Representative for the courageous decisions he has taken in order to steer BiH towards a modern political environment consistent with European norms and expressed his full support for these efforts and for the High Representative personally.

The High Representative expressed his satisfaction that BiH is scheduled to join the Council of Europe early next year, though he added that he is concerned about the slow fulfillment of EU road-map conditions, particularly since BiH's future is now universally viewed in the context of integration with Europe. He asked Mr Pique to support BiH's Europeanisation process during Spain's Presidency of the EU.

On Tuesday afternoon, the High Representative met with Mark Malloch Brown, head of the UN Development Program. The High Representative briefed Mr Brown on the efforts of the International Community, under OHR leadership, to increase the efficiency of its activities in BiH through improved coordination and systematic streamlining. The two discussed ways in which the UNDP's operations in BiH – particularly in areas such as human rights, refugee return, the rule of law, education and building a civil society – can be optimised. They agreed on the need to ensure that economic and social infrastructure are put in place quickly and efficiently so that returnees are able to support themselves.

The High Representative commended the UNDP for its active participation in the Srebrenica Action Plan and its support for civil service reform in BiH.

On Tuesday evening the High Representative traveled to Washington, where he will meet with senior US government officials, including Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.