

HR lobbies for continued support for Bosnia and Herzegovina

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, is currently visiting New York and Washington to lobby for continued support for the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yesterday, during the UN General Assembly's annual meeting at the level of foreign ministers, he had meetings with the United Nations Under-Secretary for Peace Keeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guehenno, and the Portuguese Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jaime Gama. In addition, he also met briefly with the Croatian, Czech and Swiss Foreign Ministers.

The High Representative briefed Mr Guehenno on the streamlining exercise that the international civilian organisations in BiH are conducting under the lead of the OHR, with the goal of maximising their efficiency. The High Representative has been tasked with presenting options for a follow-on police mission to be established when UNMIBH's mandate runs out at the end of next year. In his talks with Mr Guehenno, he commended UNMIBH/IPTF for having vetted more than 24,000 police personnel, for having established multi-ethnic police forces – though this restructuring effort is not yet completed – and for having trained thousands of policemen in various aspects of policing, as well as for having built up the State Border Service. The High Representative and Mr Guehenno agreed that the UN's full support in developing a structure that will continue UNMIBH/IPTF's valuable work will be crucial for a seamless hand-over to a possible follow-on mission.

With Jaime Gama, the Foreign Minister of Portugal, who will take over as the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE on 1 January 2002, the High Representative discussed the OSCE's future role in BiH in the context of the streamlining effort. In this regard, the traditionally close co-operation between the OHR and the OSCE mission to BiH as well as its headquarters in Vienna was underlined.

In the margins of the UN General Assembly meeting, the High Representative updated participating ministers about the situation in BiH. He briefed Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kavan and Swiss Foreign Minister Joseph Deiss. With Croatian Foreign Minister Tonino Picula, the High Representative briefly discussed new political developments among the Croats of BiH as well as the implementation of the Constitutional Court's decision on the constituent status of BiH's peoples in both Entities.

Today, the High Representative will meet with the Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Pique. This is particularly important as Spain will take over the EU Presidency in January. He will also meet with Mark Malloch Brown, the head of the UN Development Program (UNDP). With Mr Brown, the High Representative is planning to discuss the UNDP's future involvement in BiH, in particular with regard to demining, the international community's Srebrenica Action Plan, and civil service reform, all of which are issues where the UNDP is active.

Later in the week, the High Representative will travel on to Washington D.C. to meet with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and other senior State Department officials, as well as representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).