

Press Release by the PIC Steering Board

At a meeting in Brussels today, the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) reviewed progress in implementing the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) since the last full meeting of the PIC in Madrid in December 1998. The Board also reviewed the progress made over the last two years under the leadership of the High Representative Carlos Westendorp and expressed gratitude for his outstanding contribution. Further, the Board thanked Ambassador Jacques Paul Klein and Ambassador Hanns Schumacher for their work as Principal and Senior Deputy High Representatives and welcomed the appointments of their successors, Ambassador Ralph Johnson and Ambassador Matei Hoffmann. The Board also endorsed Wolfgang Petritsch as the new High Representative.

The Steering Board warmly congratulated High Representative Westendorp for his extraordinary commitment to the peace process. The Board emphasized that there had been considerable progress over the last two years in a variety of areas and, although much still had to be done, Bosnia and Herzegovina was substantially more stable and democratic than it had been when Ambassador Westendorp assumed office. The introduction of unified license plates, a flag and anthem, a common currency and passport, as well as the passage of essential legislation – such as the citizenship law, the privatization law, the telecommunication law, the amendments on the property laws – are only a few examples of Ambassador Westendorp's accomplishments.

The Steering Board Members approved the EU nomination of Austrian Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch as the new High Representative from the end of July, and asked the United Nations Security Council to endorse his appointment. They also

urged all members of the PIC and the donor community to continue to support the peace process and the efforts of the High Representative, as consolidating the successes of the last two years in BiH was an essential element in encouraging stability in the region as a whole.

However, the Steering Board noted that the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina had still not yet shown the commitment necessary to move the country toward self-sustaining peace and economic stability. Specifically, it expressed dissatisfaction with the inadequate functioning of the Common Institutions and Joint Federation Institutions, with the performance of elected officials and the pace of economic reform. The Board urged Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders to double their efforts in reaching the objectives and deadlines set out in the Madrid Declaration and reminded the FRY and the Republic of Croatia of their obligations in the implementation of the Dayton Accords, in particular with regard to returns of refugees and displaced people to their homes.