

Communiqué by the PIC Steering Board

The PIC Steering Board at the level of Political Directors met with the High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Wolfgang Petritsch, at the invitation of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Lisbon on 5 May 2000.

The Steering Board and the High Representative, in concurrence with the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina acknowledged that the municipal elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 8 April 2000 were free and fair and passed without any serious incidents. The Steering Board analysed the results of the municipal elections. It was noted that they brought about greater democratic pluralism in some places at the expense of ruling ethnic-based parties.

The Steering Board also discussed the issue of holding general elections in fall this year in light of the fact that the responsible authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have failed so far to adopt an election law. However, the Steering Board was of the opinion that the general elections should be held in fall this year, knowing that this could only be done after approval by the Permanent Council of the OSCE under its mandate and in accordance with the provisional election rules and regulations. These will have to be modified to incorporate the provisions of the Draft Election Law earlier approved by the Steering Board.

The Steering Board again noticed with regret that the issue of the Council of Ministers, dysfunctional since February this year, has not been solved yet. The Steering Board holds the opinion that the legislative bodies are to be held accountable for the contents of the adopted new law on the Council of Ministers with regard to the standards set by the decision of the Constitutional Court. They are also responsible for the proper functioning of the Council of Ministers by nominating and approving a Chair who is capable of fulfilling the obligations of the post and who is acceptable to represent the interests of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) briefed the Steering Board, focusing on UNMIBH's operations in monitoring and assessing the judicial system. The Steering Board acknowledged the need for further advances in judicial reform and the promotion of the Rule of Law. Structural and institutional reforms, particularly relating to increasing the independence of the courts and respect for their decisions, must be implemented without delay. The Steering Board recognises that the envisaged reforms of the judicial system in Bosnia and Herzegovina require a continuing international presence that can oversee the work of domestic judicial selection institutions and otherwise assist in the implementation of programs.

The Steering Board adopted the Financial Experts' recommendations of 9 March and 18 April 2000.