

Communiqué by the PIC Steering Board

Communiqué by the Foreign Ministers of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council

The Foreign Ministers of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council met today with the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina and representatives of the signatory states to review the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to set priorities for the rest of 1998.

Ministers noted with satisfaction the substantial progress made since their last meeting in Bonn. However, they deplored the fact that success is sometimes hampered by nationalistic resistance and emphasised that progress is not yet irreversible. Ministers reaffirmed their determination to entrench the principles that lie at the heart of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia's life. This means keeping an international presence, both civil and military. In this regard, Ministers welcomed the intention to continue SFOR beyond June 30 to ensure a secure environment.

Ministers noted that progress has required considerable efforts by the international community, and especially by the High Representative. The Bosnian leaders elected in 1996 have not made sufficient efforts to implement the Peace Agreement and so lay the basis for a peaceful and prosperous future. Ministers issued a warning to authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina that the country must begin to stand on its own. The degree of international involvement and assistance that the country today enjoys will not last forever. Bosnia and Herzegovina must seize this chance to build effective political institutions and establish a free market economy.

The September elections are a major opportunity for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to hold their leaders accountable, take their future into their own hands and elect representatives who will lead their country into the European family of nations. Ministers stated their strong support for full OSCE supervision of the 1998 elections.

The declaration adopted by the Steering Board sets out the concrete requirements to accelerate peace implementation during the remainder of 1998. It reiterates the fundamental right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes. The phased and orderly return of refugees and displaced persons is crucial to a lasting peace and the development of a viable multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina. The declaration calls for a modern, pluralistic and democratic country based on the principles of multi-ethnicity, tolerance and reconciliation, and sets out a clear plan of action to make this happen. It supports the High Representative's media reform program and endorses the use of the High Representative's full authority in cases where leaders are obstructing peace implementation.

Ministers called on Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to meet their obligations to implement the Peace Agreement and to enhance regional stability.

Ministers thanked the High Representative for his work during the past six months and reaffirmed their strong support for him as the highest civil authority in theatre. Ministers also expressed their appreciation for the work of other international organisations with responsibility for helping to implement the Peace Agreement.

Office of the High Representative