

Communique by the PIC Steering Board

The PIC Steering Board at the level of Political Directors met with the High Representative in Sarajevo on 13 July 2000.

To commemorate the 5th anniversary of the fall of Srebrenica, the members of the Steering Board expressed their sincere sympathy and continued solidarity with the survivors of the massacre and the families of the victims. They expressed their appreciation to the competent authorities of both entities and to the SFOR and IPTF for enabling the ceremony in Potocari to be conducted in an appropriate and dignified manner.

The Steering Board met with the newly established Council of Ministers. The Steering Board reminded the Council of Ministers of its responsibility to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to work through rapidly the backlog of unresolved issues. The Steering Board stressed that the Council of Ministers had to make up for lost time. The Council of Ministers must base its work program on the priorities outlined in the Brussels PIC document of 23 May 2000 and other relevant documents to which Bosnia and Herzegovina has committed itself.

The Steering Board took note of the significance of the Constitutional Court's decision on the "constituent peoples" case. Pending the publication of the Court's decision it was held that a final assessment of the implications of the decision was not yet possible. The Steering Board, however, warned against attempts from interested parties to put in question the Court's exclusive status and recalled the binding nature of the decision that obliged entity parliaments and cantonal assemblies to implement it accordingly.

The Steering Board agreed with the term of an election mandate of two years for the state as well as for entity parliaments for the november 2000 elections as proposed by the High Representative in consultation with OSCE HoM.

The Steering Board and the High Representative agreed that the issue of judicial reform and the promotion of the rule of law needed a sustained effort by the International Community. To this end, the High Representative will establish the Independent Judicial Commission which will be tasked with the supervision of the entity and cantonal commissions/council responsible for selecting and disciplining judges and prosecutors and to continue the monitoring and assessment of courts and prosecutor's offices in line with the closing mandate of JSAP.

The Steering Board noted with great interest the encouraging attempts by responsible politicians in Mostar to find pragmatic forms of cooperation across the ethnic divide which aim at establishing normal life in the city and at its eventual unification. In this context, the continued financial contribution of the European Union was welcomed, as was the Mostar Document signed between representatives of the European Union and of the city of Mostar and its six City Municipalities. It took note of the announcement by the City authorities that they would begin working on the final status of Mostar. In addition, the recent US Government initiative to institute its business loan program in the Mostar area was welcomed.

The Steering Board welcomed the initiatives by the High Representative to support the efforts of the governments of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in normalising their bilateral relations by promoting the resolution of refugee return issues and developing increased economic cooperation between the two countries.

The Steering Board discussed the issue of a state defense establishment as stated in the Brussels PIC declaration following a presentation by COMSFOR to the Steering Board who focused on the restructuring of the Entity Armed Forces.

The Steering Board welcomed the High Representative's presentation of an implementation agenda that will integrate all demands of the International Community addressed to the BiH authorities in one comprehensive list.

Also, the Steering Board renewed its full commitment to ensure coordination and monitoring of the privatisation process. The Steering Board endorsed the High Representative's continued efforts in the reform of labour law throughout BiH to make it consistent with ILO conventions, in the reform of the pension systems and in the solution of the restitution issue.

The Steering Board welcomed the progress achieved in signing the Education Declaration and Agreement by the entity ministers on 10 May which will lead to a gradual reform in the existing parallel systems and urged rapid implementation.

The Steering Board took note of the restructuring process of the public broadcasting system now moving into its implementation phase and pledged its support in tackling the outstanding financial problems in order to generate an effective resource base. It noted the recent adoption of the Stability Pact media charter and called on all authorities to honour this important document. Organs of the state must not be used to intimidate media and press outlets, particularly in the run up to the elections in fall.

The Russian delegation reiterated its position that it did not consider itself bound by the Brussels PIC declaration. However, it stated that it would continue to contribute actively and consistently on the basis of the GFAP in the development of the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Office of the High Representative