

Statement by the High Representative, Carl Bildt following the Meetings in Geneva

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Geneva, 18 March 1996

The first phase of the implementation of the Peace Agreement is now coming to an end. March 14 was the deadline on a number of important political and constitutional issues, and March 19 is the deadline on important military and territorial issues, including the final transfer of authority in the Sarajevo area.

As we enter the next phase, it is thus appropriate to review compliance with the Peace Agreement. The Geneva meeting has asked me to submit a comprehensive compliance review to the Moscow Ministerial Meeting of the Contact Group countries on Saturday, based on the report I have now submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

A serious issue of non-compliance during the first phase has been the failure by the Parties to release all prisoners as registered by the ICRC. This should have happened already by January 19, but as reported by the ICRC there are still 219 prisoners behind bars who should have been released.

The commitment today to release all these prisoners prior to the Moscow Ministerial on March 23 is thus of particular significance.

My main worry is that the forces of ethnic separation still are far stronger than the forces of ethnic reintegration. The developments in and around Sarajevo, as well as the tensions in the Federation bear tragic testimony to this fact.

It is thus imperative that all the political personalities and forces genuinely committed to a multi-ethnic Bosnia reinforce their efforts to bring about the gradual reintegration of the country. The international community must give all the support it can to these efforts. Proper preparations for the elections, and access to the media for all political views, are crucial to reintegration.

The statement on the Federation reflects the deep concern over the state of the Federation, most notably the lack of the implementation of the commitments undertaken in Rome. My Principal Deputy Ambassador Steiner will continue regular high-level talks on the Federation issues.

The next phase of implementation of the Peace Agreement will cover the period up until the Rome Review Conference of the Peace Implementation Conference June 13-14. With most of the military implementation issues behind us, the focus will be on efforts to jump-start the Bosnian economy, on the final preparations for the elections and on the beginning of the long process of return of the refugees.