

Progress on the Conditions for the Entry of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Council of Europe Reviewed

Yesterday, 11th November 1999, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, chaired a discussion on the application for membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe and the progress made in the application preconditions. The Council of Europe was represented by the Rapporteur from the Political Committee, Mr. Peter Bloetzer, and the Rapporteur from the Legal Affairs and Human Rights Committee, Mrs. Anneli Jaatteenmaki.

The Representatives of the Ministries of Education, Justice and Interior from both the Federation and the Republika Srpska reported on the project of the removal of objectionable and offensive material from school textbooks, developments in human rights and judicial issues and the functioning of state institutions. Also discussed were the draft election law and police reform.

The meeting was also attended by Principal Deputy High Representative Ralph Johnson, Senior Deputy High Representative Matei Hoffmann, Head of the OSCE Mission in BiH Robert Barry and Deputy SRSR Julian Harston from UNMiBH.

Earlier this year the Council of Europe had set a list of preconditions concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the Council of Europe. Unfortunately, there has been little progress in, e.g., the performance of state institutions and the implementation of European standards in education and human rights.

The Council of Europe Rapporteurs also specified legislation

that State and Entity Parliaments will have to adopt, including laws on Elections, a Border Service, Associations and Foundations, Immigration and Asylum, the Treasury, Judicial Reform and Citizenship. The competent BiH authorities will at least need to give a timetable of the parliamentary proceedings concerning these laws, if Bosnia and Herzegovina is to meet the minimum requirements for accession to the Council of Europe.

OHR will continue working to ensure access to the Council of Europe at the earliest practical time. The High Representative firmly believes that integration into Europe is crucial if Bosnia and Herzegovina is to enjoy future stability and prosperity. The elected leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina is responsible for living up to the standards required for such integration steps.