Decision on RS Radio-Television

The High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch issued a Decision on Tuesday, 31 August, bringing Republika Srpska closer to European standards on public broadcasting.

The Decision introduces amendments to the law on the public radio-television of Republika Srpska that remove the most serious violations of European standards and bring it into line with the Interim Arrangements which should have been adopted in February 1998. The amendments uphold the principles of editorial independence, financial transparency and cultural pluralism.

The goal of this Decision is to ensure that radio-television funded with public funds serves the interests of the citizens of Republika Srpska without political bias or interference. Under these changes, the Entity broadcaster has been renamed as Radio-Television Republika Srpska (RTRS).

The High Representative views this Decision as an interim step and wishes to see the Republika Srpska National Assembly address this issue. Despite previous appeals, the National Assembly has failed to introduce legal clarity on this matter for the past 18 months. The Decision requires the RS National Assembly to adopt a new, comprehensive law for the Entity public broadcaster by the end of February 2000. The tenure of the current Board of Governors of RTRS will expire at the same time.

It is crucial that European standards on public broadcasting apply equally to both Entities. At the moment, Republika Srpska is lagging behind the Federation in this respect, following the introduction of the Law on Radio-Television of Federation BiH. The High Representative encourages the elected

leaders of Republika Srpska to use this opportunity to ensure media legislation conforms to European principles.