

## **Decision to Extend the Deadline for Filing Claims to Repossess Socially-Owned Apartments in the Republika Srpska**

The High Representative yesterday issued a Decision under Annex 10 of the Dayton Agreement and Article XI of the Bonn PIC document, extending the deadline for claiming occupancy rights to socially-owned apartments in the Republika Srpska by six months. The new deadline is 19 December 1999.

The establishment of a claims process at municipal level by the Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons of Republika Srpska following the entry into effect of the Law on the Cessation of the Application of the Law on the Use of Abandoned Property on 19 December 1998 was delayed by at least three months in most municipalities. As a result, claimants have not had the full six months allowed them by the Law to present their claim.

In addition, the municipal offices for receiving claims have lacked sufficient resources to complete the task of registering all of the claims made by refugees and displaced persons. Monitoring efforts by international organizations, reveal that claims are not being registered due to lack of staff and basic materials; these reports are supported by statements of municipal officials themselves. As a result, many refugees and displaced persons who wish to return have not yet been able to claim their apartments.

To complete the task of registering and processing claims in the coming period, OHR calls on the Government of the Republika Srpska to ensure that adequate resources are provided so that the responsible bodies can fulfill their obligations under the Law.

This Decision applies only to the Republika Srpska deadline. The deadline for claiming apartments in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina remains 4 July 1999.

The High Representative takes this opportunity to encourage all refugees and displaced persons from both Entities who have not yet claimed their apartments to do so as soon as possible.