

Council of Ministers

Yesterday saw the approval of a new Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliament. The High Representative is pleased that this approval has finally taken place and wishes the members of the Council of Ministers every success.

Due to the loss of several months, however, the Council of Ministers must redouble its efforts in the coming months. The High Representative expects the first constituent meeting to take place within the next few days. He further expects the Parliamentary Assembly to work in tandem with the Council of Ministers to ensure the smooth adoption of key legislation.

Real work lies ahead. The members of the Council know the OHR's priorities: the Budget Law of 1999, the Civil Aviation Act, implementation of the Law on Citizenship, and Laws on refugees, immigration and asylum in Bosnia Herzegovina, to name only a few. The OHR has agreed with the Chairs that this agenda, and the issue of how the structures of the Council of Ministers can be made more efficient, should be tackled immediately.

The session of the House of Representatives was marred by a walk-out of SDS and SRS delegates. The reason given for this behavior can only be considered as a pretext. The Co-Chairs, Vice Chair, ministers and deputy ministers of the Council of Ministers were appointed by the Parliament in complete accordance with the Constitution. The High Representative would like to make clear that the boycotting of sessions is completely unacceptable, especially at a time when the Parliamentary Assembly's agenda includes legislation of fundamental importance to the lives of the citizens of this country. He urges the delegates of the SDS and SRS to fulfill their obligations and return to their place of work at the next meeting. The credibility of their parties' commitment to

the public good and Dayton implementation is at stake.

The High Representative expects the House of Representatives to meet for its next session on 10 February, as agreed already by the Collegia. The first priority should be a decision on the national anthem of Bosnia Herzegovina.