

## **Bugojno Investigation**

The High Representative and the OSCE reject outright the accusations made by Dzevad Mlaco, Mayor of Bugojno, which appeared in Dnevni Avaz on 6 November 1998, concerning the special investigation conducted by the Federation Ombudsmen into the misappropriation of state owned property in the Municipality of Bugojno.

The Federation Ombudsmen are authorised under the Federation Constitution to protect the rights and liberties of all citizens, by examining the activities of any authority of the Federation, including municipalities. It is a constitutional obligation of all officials of the Federation, at all levels of government, to cooperate with and support the activities of the Federation Ombudsmen.

The special investigation into misappropriation of state property in Bugojno was carried out jointly by the Federation Ombudsmen and the OSCE, on the request of the OHR. The OHR initiated the investigation in response to numerous complaints by citizens alleging violations of the law in the Bugojno Municipality.

The Report was based upon a thorough investigation of the records kept by Bugojno municipality, and presented an objective legal analysis of a number of specific property transactions which took place in that Municipality. In the opinion of the OHR, the investigation was carried out in a highly professional manner.

Based upon the findings of the Federation Ombudsmen and the OSCE, the OHR has requested the Public Attorney of the Central Bosnia Canton to determine the appropriate legal remedy in response to each violation of the law identified in the Report. Mayor Mlaco is required to co-operate fully with the work of the Public Attorney. The OHR expects the Municipal Assembly of Bugojno to halt all construction work on the properties in question, pending the actions of the Public Attorney.

The Federation Ombudsmen have stated that the problem of corrupt and illegal property transactions at the municipal level is widespread throughout the Federation, with very serious consequences for the rights of individual citizens. The OHR has written to Prime Minister Bicakcic, asking him to take appropriate steps to address this problem wherever it is occurring.

The OHR and OSCE reiterate their full support for the constitutional role played by the Federation Ombudsmen. The Ombudsmen have been a strong voice in support of the rights of all citizens of the Federation, irrespective of their nationality. Their work is a vital contribution to the peace process.