

High Representatives meets with Trade Union Presidents

At the invitation of HR Carlos Westendorp, the presidents of the Trade Unions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Sulejman Hrle, President of the Confederation of Trade Unions BiH, and Mr. Cedo Volas, President of the Confederation of Trade Unions RS, met with Mr. Westendorp on 14 October in Sarajevo. This second meeting of its kind followed a first one of both Trade Union presidents with the then Deputy High Representative, Michael Steiner, on 7 June, at which the need for cooperation between both Trade Unions and of a good working relationship with OHR had been stressed.

HR Westendorp took the opportunity at this meeting to again congratulate both presidents on their recent re-election to their offices, adding that the renewed legitimacy given to both of them in the respective first post-war congresses in the RS and in the Federation was a signal, not only to the working people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to recognize the democratic legitimacy of their leaders in the process of peaceful reconstruction in BiH.

The possible establishment of a cooperative body to address the rights and interest of the workers of BiH was discussed as a means to bring together Trade Unions throughout BiH into a common body that would work for the betterment of the social situation in BiH and the implementation of European social standards in the country.

Both the Trade Unions and HR Westendorp agreed on a standing mutual consultation on the social status in BH. The HR asked both Trade Unions to support OHR's own efforts by presenting to him regular reports on the social status of the people in BiH.

During the meeting, HR Westendorp stressed the vital part to be played by the Trade Unions in the democratic process in BiH and expressed his high respect for the work which was being done by the Trade Unions during hard times and, more particularly, by their former and current presidents.

In this context, the need for a fair and balanced media coverage throughout BiH was stressed by both Mr Volas and Mr Hrle, who also underscored the importance of impartial information and communication in accordance with the highest professional standards of democratic countries, and in conformity with the letter and spirit of the Peace Agreement.

They also stressed the need for greater authority to be given to Mr. Westendorp, for a faster and more efficient application of the Dayton Agreement.