

High Representative introduces new fora for political partnership

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today launched an initiative aimed at enhancing the level of co-operation between the new Council of Ministers, the civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the High Representative himself. The High Representative proposes to set up a Partnership Forum at which the Council of Ministers and the High Representative, together with his experts, will confer regularly on current issues and on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The High Representative has personally apprised the new Chair of the Council of Ministers, Mr Zlatko Lagumdžija, of this initiative. At the same time, the High Representative will inaugurate a Civic Forum, at which distinguished public figures in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be invited to contribute ideas and opinions on issues of public concern.

Two years after the High Representative first proposed the concept of ownership, Bosnia and Herzegovina has reached a turning point. Under the new Chair of the Council of Ministers the idea of ownership has been fully accepted. The country is clearly on its way towards reassuming its own responsibilities. Therefore the time has come to establish an atmosphere of partnership and co-operation, encompassing the institutions and the civil society of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The High Representative is confident that the Partnership Forum will enhance the exchange of information between the OHR and the Council of Ministers. This will help coordinate the work of the High Representative as the final authority under the Dayton Peace Agreement, and the executive. This should

help to achieve the ambitious agenda the Council of Ministers has set for itself.

At the same time, the Civic Forum will allow the High Representative to engage in constructive and in-depth dialogue with distinguished representatives from the fields of science, culture, media, trade unions and business throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is of the utmost importance for the future of the country that every intellectual resource is brought to bear on the difficult tasks that lie ahead.