

High Representative calls for reform of healthcare on visit to Sarajevo's University Hospital

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today called for reform in the way healthcare is managed in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure public funds filter down to those who really need them. He said increased communication and cooperation between both health institutions and governments on various levels, transparent collection and disbursement of public money to health institutions, and improved management could ensure a better, more efficient health service.

The High Representative made the call during a visit to the Clinical Centre of Sarajevo University (Kosevo Hospital), where he spoke with the hospital's recently appointed director, Dr Faris Gavrankapetanovic. Dr Gavrankapetanovic showed the High Representative around the hospital's paediatric unit, which treats premature babies in its intensive care unit and also children with cancer. The director also showed the High Representative a new unit to sterilise instruments at the hospital – to be opened later this month.

The High Representative outlined to Dr Gavrankapetanovic and hospital staff that his office's number one priority for 2001 – economic reform – also included vital public institutions such as Sarajevo's Kosevo hospital. He praised their hard work and underlined his enormous respect for the decision of such well-qualified professionals to stay and work in Bosnia and Herzegovina and not leave for better paid work abroad.

The High Representative said he understood that many doctors

wanted to concentrate their skills on practising medicine and bring in trained managers to provide an efficient, cost effective service to the BiH public. The High Representative said the new BiH government, his own office, the World Bank and the European Union were looking at ways of improving the system of health insurance and were also studying ways to provide more efficient financing of the public sector in general. The High Representative underlined that BiH citizens would have to pay their taxes and social contributions if they wanted decent healthcare for themselves and their children.

The High Representative also stressed there should be no boundaries for a service like healthcare and that communication and the exchange of information and cooperation should increase between hospitals, health centres, clinics and Health Insurance Funds across Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said this would also greatly aid the continuing priority of refugee returns.