High Representative Addresses European Parliament

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today in Brussels for the first time addressed the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament and held a meeting with the Coordinator of the Stability Pact, Bodo Hombach.

In his speech before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, the High Representative stressed that "there can be no lasting regional stability without a stable Bosnia and Herzegovina". He called upon the European Union to widen its involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, engage further in shaping "a multi-ethnic, democratic country based on the rule of law" and to reject calls for a redrawing of borders. "The alternative", according to the High Representative, "is renewed instability." The High Representative advocated that compliance with the Dayton Accords as well as the United Nations war crimes tribunal should be conditions for foreign aid to all countries in the region, including Yugoslavia.

The High Representative thanked the EU for its financial engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He was particularly grateful for two donations to support the return of refugees of 50 million Euros each in 2000 and 2001. He called upon the Members of the European Parliament to widen their commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina. "To cut out now, just as Bosnia and Herzegovina is turning the corner, would see all previous money wasted, with only more, costly unrest to follow", the High Representative warned, at the same time outlining his confidence that Bosnia and Herzegovina would meet all the conditions of the EU Road Map over the next six months time.

Furthermore, the High Representative stressed that European unification could serve as a model for the future development

of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The aim to de-politicise the Bosnian economy through “functional integration” is at the core of the High Representatives strategy, seeking to close ethnic-based monopolies in utilities, opening telecoms and power generation up to competition. “It is economic self-interest, the slow but perceptible beginnings of a single economic space that will secure Bosnia’s future and bring its people together in a concrete way”, the High Representative stated.

Underlining his commitment, the High Representative announced that he would do his utmost to speed up reform. He said, that he would not hesitate to remove anti-Dayton officials and politicians and use his powers to impose laws where he saw them as absolutely necessary.

In his meeting with the Coordinator of the Stability Pact, Bodo Hombach, the High Representative talked about further cooperation and ways to improve the participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Stability Pact, especially in the field of economic development and regional return.