

The High Representative re-establishes Pre-war Municipality of Srebrenica

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, yesterday issued a Decision abolishing the so-called Municipality of Skelani and restoring the pre-war boundaries of the Municipality of Srebrenica.

The High Representative was forced to issue this Decision because the illegal "Municipality of Skelani" had continued to perform the functions of a municipality despite the Office of the High representative's Legal Opinion dated 10 December 1999, which ruled that this "municipality" was unconstitutional and null and void. This Legal Opinion had been communicated to the RS Government a year ago.

The purported "Municipality of Skelani" was established by the RS National Assembly in 1992 without any consultation with the majority Bosniak population of Srebrenica. The apparent aim of this move was to strip Srebrenica of territory, security and economic resources. More recently, the illegal existence of this alleged "municipality" had hampered returns and reconciliation and put back Srebrenica's economic recovery. It has promoted division, separation, isolation and stagnation.

Having in mind the tragic events occurring in Srebrenica in 1995 and its unique and unparalleled significance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative was compelled to issue this Decision. Its aim is to facilitate the return of those who fled, and to end the continued isolation of the RS citizens living in the part of Srebrenica that was once referred to as a "safe haven," so that in the future Srebrenica – within its pre-war boundaries of which Skelani is again a minor settlement – may be seen as a place of

reconciliation.

The High Representative's Decision annuls the 1992 RS Law on Establishing the Serb Municipality of Skelani and amends the 1994 RS Law on Territorial Organisation and Local Self-Government. It annuls the 1995 Statute of the Municipality of Srebrenica and further deletes any other reference to the so-called "Municipality of Skelani" in any other law, by-law, regulation or legal document of the RS. It imposes a new Statute of the Municipality of Srebrenica.

The High Representative's Decision is required to be published without delay in the Official Gazettes of the RS and of the Municipality of Srebrenica and shall come into force on the day of publication in the RS Official Gazette.

The High Representative issued this Decision exercising the powers vested in him under Annex 10 of the Dayton Peace Agreement and subsequent Declarations and Conclusions by the Peace Implementation Council.