

## **OHR welcomes agreements ensuring continued mandates of BiH Ombudsman, Human Rights Chamber and Commission for Real Property Claims until end 2003**

The Office of the High Representative today welcomed two Agreements signed on November 10 by the Council of Ministers and the Federation and RS governments which retains the firm legal footing of the BiH Ombudsman, the Human Rights Chamber and the Commission for Real Property Claims (CRPC).

The agreements, in relation to Annex 6 and Annex 7 of the Dayton Peace Agreement, ensure that these institutions' valuable work can continue until at least the end of 2003, and regulate how they will operate until that date. These agreements are in line with the Peace Implementation Council's Brussels Declaration of May 2000.

The BiH Ombudsman has had nearly half of its non-binding recommendations acted on by Entity and State governments, including the scrapping of a law in 1997 which attempted to impose the cyrillic script as the only legal alphabet for use by the media in RS and the 1998 repeal of a Federation law privatising apartments prior to the return of pre-war occupants.

The Human Rights Chamber has issued 700 binding legal decisions since 1996, while the Commission for Real Property Claims has made 127,000 decisions relating to claims for the return of 283,000 properties.

The OHR, however, wants the State and Entity governments to pay more heed to the BiH Ombudsman's recommendations and to implement the decisions of the Human Rights Chamber and the CRPC in full and without delay. OHR will monitor the progress of the new governments in implementing these recommendations and decisions.