

Ambassador's Tour of Return Areas

Ambassadors of countries represented in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been invited by the High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, COMSFOR Lt. Gen. Ronald E. Adams and UNHCR Chief of Mission Werner Blatter to visit today by helicopter key areas of return across the country.

The aim of the tour is to view progress in the return of displaced persons and refugees, and hear from returnees about their daily problems, worries and hopes.

Ambassadors or representatives of 22 nations have signed up for the tour, which is taking place today. Separated in three groups and accompanied by the High Representative, SFOR Commanders and UNHCR's Chief of Mission Blatter as well as other staff from the three organizations, they will visit a total of seven sites: Stupni Do (Vares municipality) and Bratunac in MND North; Fazlagic Kula (Gacko municipality), Stolac and Visnjica (municipality Kiseljak) in MND Southeast; and Hambarine (Prijedor municipality) and Drvar in MND Southwest. The return process in some of the sites requires immediate financial support, while other sites have been chosen as a model for successful return projects.

The first such visit took place last September and resulted in additional funding and greater understanding of the return process and problems of those who are willing to return. This visit will be another opportunity to draw the attention of the International Community to the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes. A precondition for successful return, in particular to urban areas, is strict and efficient property law implementation.