

## **Joint Statement By Republic of Croatia Foreign Minister Tonino Picula and High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch**

The High Representative and Foreign Minister Picula noted the historic importance of the Foreign Minister's visit to Sarajevo, given the fundamental role of the Republic of Croatia at the Dayton and Paris Peace Conferences and in the years since those pivotal events. In light of this, both observed that it was particularly appropriate that the Foreign Minister's first trip abroad was to Bosnia and Herzegovina to address issues of concern to all constituent peoples and other citizens of BiH.

The Foreign Minister and the High Representative pledged to remain in close contact with one another on a wide range of issues. They stressed their commitment to the Dayton and Paris Accords' recognition of the BiH Croats as a constituent people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the legitimacy of their cultural identity. The Foreign Minister stressed the commitment of his government to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the desire to work closer with state institutions and fully embraced the concept of ownership as established by the High Representative.

Given this mutual commitment, the Foreign Minister and the High Representative agreed that the establishment of the new Federation RTV service was the appropriate mechanism to meet such social, cultural and linguistic needs of the BiH Croats, as set forth in the Federation Constitution. In addition, the government of the Republic of Croatia agreed to assist in this process by providing training support, technical assistance and high quality programming in order to foster the key Croat component of the new service.

The High Representative and the Foreign Minister agreed that the decisions of the Independent Media Commission regarding illegal broadcasting must be upheld. The Foreign Minister pledged to facilitate an early agreement between HRT and the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to legitimize the continuation of some high quality Croatian domestic programming from HRT. They also agreed to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between the public broadcasters of both countries as a means to reduce public expenditures.

The Foreign Minister and the High Representative welcomed the work of the Stability Pact, and its potential for regional cooperation, especially in refugee return and economic cooperation.

The High Representative and the Foreign Minister took special note of the need for transparency and trust in the relations between the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and expressed their full confidence that the Foreign Minister's visit would provide a solid basis for such a relationship.