

## **OHR Reaction to HDZ Position on Financial Police**

The Office of the High Representative rejects the statement made by the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton HDZ political representatives against the Federation Finance Police on 1 February in Neum. The statement lacks any legal basis, as the Finance Police is a Federation body and outside the jurisdiction of Cantons. It represents an irresponsible act against a legitimate law enforcement agency and indirectly supports the system of corruption and fraud which the HN Canton leadership should be fighting.

The Federation Finance Police has exclusive competencies to investigate corruption and fraud. No public or private institution can declare itself exempt from legal government agencies such as the Finance Police. The Finance Police is an independent agency dedicated to fighting financial abuse.

The OHR considers the HDZ statement to be undermining the autonomy of the Finance Police, which makes it effective. Such statements suggest that those issuing them are not genuinely committed to fighting corruption and fraud. This is unacceptable. The successful fight against corruption and fraud is vital in ensuring a proper social, economic and legal framework in which BiH's citizens can enjoy safety and certainty.

The OHR expects all Herzegovina-Neretva Canton public authorities to fully support the work of the Finance Police. Any attempts to obstruct its work will be understood as acts supporting corruption and fraud. Recommendations aimed at improving the work of the Finance Police should be made to the appropriate Federal bodies. Such proposals should be constructive and directed towards strengthening, not weakening the law enforcement agencies fighting for the public confidence.