Draft Election Law resubmitted to Parliament

Yesterday, Tuesday 25 January, the draft election law was resubmitted to the Parliamentary Assembly by the OSCE.

After much thought and wide consultation, OHR and OSCE have decided on a number of alterations to the draft, and to remove altogether the most controversial section, which deals with the presidential elections.

The alterations to the draft were made in response to the most serious objections of legislators and other groups. The provisions regarding the presidential elections were removed, in part, because presidential elections are not due until 2002. There will thus be time to address this key issue at a later date. It is not expedient to allow a draft law of such importance to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to founder over this single issue.

These amendments should not be misinterpreted. They should be taken as a clear demonstration of the importance that the International Community attaches to the adoption of a permanent election law for this country. The changes also show that the International Community has taken the parties seriously, as it has incorporated revisions that would strengthen this law.

To date, there has been no serious debate on the draft election law in the Parliamentary Assembly. The rejection of the first draft, very disappointingly, precluded even the possibility of further discussion.

This resubmitted draft is an opportunity for the Parliamentary Assembly to demonstrate its seriousness as a body, as well as its commitment to the welfare of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. OHR and OSCE earnestly hope that they will grasp

this opportunity with both hands, and make the necessary steps towards Europe.