

Agreement on Education for Returnees in Vares Primary School

Senior Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Dr. Matei Hoffmann, welcomes the agreement on the use of the Vares school building by both Croat and Bosniak primary school students, which was reached yesterday during his visit to Vares.

Ambassador Hoffmann's meeting with Kemal Celebic, the Cantonal Minister of Education, his deputy Zvonimir Lukacevic, Pavlo Vidovic, the Mayor of Vares, his deputy Samir Musa, and the Principals of both primary schools brought to an end the politically motivated conflict preventing 205 Croat returnee pupils from attending classes in the Vares Primary School. From the start of the new school year in September, these pupils will no longer have to attend inadequate premises, but will be taught under the curriculum of their parents' choice in the Vares Primary School. Before the end of the current school year, an "Open Doors" event will be organised by the Vares School to welcome the Croat pupils, most of whom are former students of this school.

The agreement reached in Vares specifies that the Croat pupils school records for the current school year will be recognised by the Vares Primary School, thus ensuring the returnees do not lose the benefit of their work. In addition, the issue of Croat teachers' salaries, which have not been paid since January 2000, is to be addressed by the competent Canton authorities and the OHR.

The teachers and administrators of both schools are also to devise means of harmonising the curricula on the basis of the Declaration and Agreement signed by all the Ministers of

Education of BiH on May 10th 2000, and subsequently endorsed by the Cantonal Education Ministers of the Federation.

If the results of this cooperation are positive, the World Bank will consider financing cooperation projects between the two groups in the Federation under its Quality Fund for Primary and Secondary Education. The World Bank may also make funding for teacher training available.

In his opening remarks at the meeting, Ambassador Hoffmann reminded the participants of the conclusions reached at the recent PIC Conference in Brussels and the decision of the Office of the High Representative not to tolerate obstructionism in any area, including education. The International Community will carefully watch developments at the Primary School of Vares in the coming months to ensure that the measures agreed upon on 1st June 2000 translate into concrete action for the benefit of all its pupils.