All BiH Pupils to Learn Both Scripts

The High Representative is pleased that an implementation agreement on the teaching of both Cyrillic and Latin scripts in BiH schools was finally reached yesterday by Education Ministers, in line with the their broader agreement on education of May 10th, 2000. This is a key step in developing a modern, tolerant, education system, which, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has been held hostage to narrow nationalist interest for far too long.

The aim of yesterdays meeting in Sarajevo, attended by Federation Education Minister Fahrudin Rizvanbegovic, his deputy Ivo Miro Jovic and the RS Minister of Education Nenad Suzic and chaired jointly by the OHR and the Council of Europe, was to verify the implementation of the provisions of the 10 May 2000 Education Agreement.

OHR welcomes the constructive spirit of the Ministers who agreed that the teaching of the second alphabet should begin in the second semester of the second grade of primary school and is to be included as part of the Language and Literature class. With the start of the third year of primary school, a minimum of 20% of the texts used thereafter in Language and Literature classes in both Primary and Secondary education will be printed in the second script. Pupils will also be required to use the second script to ensure continuity of practice and study. Yesterday’s agreement states that this measure is to be implemented with immediate effect. The International Community will, of course, verify its correct implementation.

Many issues agreed by the Education Ministers on May 10th remain open, although yesterdays meeting showed that there has also been progress in other areas; a second review of

textbooks and the creation of textbook supplements for books imported from Croatia or the FRY are ongoing, the Human Rights and Civic Education course, to be introduced in September 2001 is being developed, as are the language, literature, culture, and culture of religions courses, which should reflect the traditions of all constituent peoples in BiH, and which will be taught throughout BiH.

UNESCO will provide expertise to assist local experts, with the required development of the content of classes and other technical issues that will arise from these positive developments.

The High Representative feels that this is a positive move in creating an atmosphere in all areas of BiH that will support the process of return. Whilst certain commitments made in May remain outstanding, the process of ensuring that all children in BiH receive an education that matches European standards, is free of discrimination, and reflects the whole of BiH’s rich cultural history is on the right track.