

All Levels of Government Responsible for Tangible Change in Srebrenica



The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, met today in Sarajevo with representatives of four survivors associations from the Srebrenica and Podrinje area.

Participants agreed to work together to draw up a list of short- and medium-term measures that can help improve life in Srebrenica and the surrounding region, which will be put to all relevant stakeholders in the coming weeks. The HR-EUSR underlined that competent State, Entity and Municipal officials must work together to implement specific measures for Srebrenica.

The meeting today is the first in a series of consultations that the HR-EUSR is holding ahead of a meeting that will bring together all responsible for improving the situation in Srebrenica. The HR-EUSR told the Associations that he intends to invite relevant entity and state-level officials to a meeting to develop a coordinated approach to improving life for current and prospective returnees.

The HR-EUSR and the OHR's Senior Deputy High Representative, Peter Bas Backer, welcomed the increased assistance to Srebrenica pledged by entity and cantonal governments as well as the parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina . "If this support

is to be effective it must be focused and transparent and take account of the wishes of the local population,” the HR-EUSR said.

Tangible results that can improve the lives of all who live in and around Srebrenica are achievable in the short term. They include the following:

- Improved cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and judicial follow-up on the list produced by the RS government’s Srebrenica Working Group;
- Rehabilitating Srebrenica’s economy through targeted assistance, including the possibility of granting special economic status to the municipality; and
- Increasing cooperation between different levels of authority and harmonising existing regulations on health insurance and pensions in order to promote sustainable return.

The HR-EUSR noted with concern that members of the associations had supported the initiative to leave Srebrenica. “You represent some of the first and most dedicated returnees to the area. It would be a shame if people like you feel compelled to leave behind what they have been trying so bravely to re-build after the war, in arguably the most difficult area in the country,” he said.

In regards to the planned burial of Bosniacs in Bratunac, the HR-EUSR said: “The authorities in Bratunac and Banja Luka must give this issue the attention it deserves. The families of the victims have a right to bury their dead with dignity.”

The associations attending today’s meeting were the Mothers of Srebrenica and Podrinje; the Srebrenica Mothers, the Women of Srebrenica; the Association Movement of Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves; and the Organisation of families of Sehids and killed soldiers from Srebrenica Municipality.