

Donors demand that BiH authorities take real ownership of economic reform

In Washington on Thursday, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, continued a series of meetings with representatives of foreign governments and international agencies aimed at shoring up support for Bosnia and Herzegovina and keeping the outside world informed about the situation in BiH.

On Thursday, the High Representative met with representatives of World Bank directors from the Group of Eight countries and the Netherlands, which represents BiH on the World Bank and IMF Boards. He also held a separate meeting with Mike Deppler, the Director of the IMF's European Department.

The High Representative briefed the World Bank country representatives on the status of economic reform in BiH. In light of the decreasing donor funds for BiH the country representatives underlined the critical necessity that the BiH authorities assume real ownership of the economic reform program and take, on their own initiative, the sort of hard but necessary decisions which will allow reform to take root and deliver long-term benefits to ordinary citizens. They noted that a real partnership between the domestic authorities and the International Community brings with it the obligation to fulfill commitments, and that the World Bank's country assistance program for BiH is designed to reach this objective. In this regard, the refusal on the part of the RS delegates to pass state-level economic legislation was noted with great concern.

The same message was conveyed to the High Representative by Christiaan Poortman, the World Bank's Country Director for BiH and Regional Coordinator for South Eastern Europe. The High

Representative and Mr Poortman had an intensive two-hour discussion in Washington on Wednesday. Mr Poortman characterised the economic situation of BiH as alarming, and the High Representative noted that the tempo of economic reform must be speeded up.

On Thursday afternoon, the High Representative briefed senior officials of the US National Security Council, on the political and security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and on streamlining.

On Friday he will meet with Richard Armitage, the US Deputy Secretary of State, as well as with Johannes Lynn, the Vice-President of the World Bank.