

# **High Representative and Ambassador Barry discuss Amended Draft Election Law with Heads of Clubs and Political Parties**

Today, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and Ambassador Robert Barry, the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, met with the heads of clubs in the BiH Parliament and political party representatives to discuss the amended draft election law.

The High Representative and Ambassador Barry assess the meeting as useful. The contentious issues have been identified and highlighted. Discussions between the heads of clubs and political party representatives will continue on Saturday.

The High Representative and Ambassador Barry call on Bosnia and Herzegovina's parliamentarians and the political parties to demonstrate their commitment to the democratic process by agreeing on compromises that will enable the adoption of the election law.

It is two years ago that the OHR and OSCE initiated the process aimed at providing Bosnia and Herzegovina with a modern, progressive election law. This first draft, written by a group of national and international experts, was presented to the BiH Parliament last October and considered in December. However, the Parliament voted against even discussing and amending it. In this context, the OHR and the OSCE commend the efforts of the Social Democratic Party who at least put forward a draft of its own for discussion and debate.

In an effort to gather parliamentary support for the election

law, the OSCE and the OHR have now amended the first draft, taking out the most controversial chapter and incorporating the constructive criticism that had been voiced.

It is imperative that Bosnia and Herzegovina adopt the election law in order to be accepted as a member of the Council of Europe. The OSCE and the OHR have indicated that the law must be adopted by February 10th, but no later than February 15th, so that elections under the new law can be held as planned in October.

The High Representative and Ambassador Barry are expressing their strong hope that this draft will serve as a basis for further discussions and lead to the adoption of the election law.