

High Representative Holds Talks in Belgrade

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today on the second day of his two-day visit to Yugoslavia met with FRY President Vojislav Kostunica and Serbia's Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. Their discussions focused on implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and on the increasingly positive state-to-state relations between BiH and the FRY. On Sunday, the High Representative met with the FRY foreign minister, Goran Svilanovic.

During his meetings, the High Representative briefed his interlocutors on issues relating to the further implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, particularly the process of constitutional reform currently underway in BiH's Entities. The High Representative highlighted the fact that discussions on constitutional reform are entering their final stage and he emphasised that solutions which fulfill the requirements of the BiH Constitutional Court's decision must be found by political leaders in BiH. The High Representative called for support for "home-grown solutions". President Kostunica agreed that the reforms will make BiH's Constituent Peoples equal in both Entities and "should be encouraged", adding that he "hopes compromise will be reached".

The High Representative underlined the fact that Entity constitutional reform will strengthen the process of return in both Entities. He called on the Serbian and FRY authorities to consider how they can provide further concrete assistance to BiH Serb refugees currently in the FRY to help them return to BiH. This was positively received, and Prime Minister Djindjic said that a pilot project that would assist Serb return to the Neretva Valley would be developed.

The High Representative during all his meetings again highlighted the need for cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, stressing that the FRY as a signatory of the Dayton Peace Agreement is obliged to ensure that those indicted of war crimes face justice. "This process is of particular importance to BiH and also to the region as a whole," the High Representative said. "It will enable reconciliation and ensure that individuals can no longer hide their personal responsibility behind an entire people."

The High Representative welcomed the increasingly positive state-to-state relationship developing between BiH and Yugoslavia. He cited as examples of this the imminent ratification of the FRY/BiH Free Trade Agreement, impending border and dual citizenship agreements, and official visits by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Zlatko Lagumdžija, and the current visit by a BiH Parliamentary delegation to Belgrade. These developments are crucial in furthering stability and economic prosperity in BiH and the region and promoting "Europeanisation".

While in Belgrade, the High Representative also met with Zarko Korac, Serbia's Deputy Prime Minister, and Dusan Mihajlovic, Serbia's Interior Minister, and on Monday morning he met with civic leaders led by Sonja Biserko, Director of the Belgrade-based Helsinki Human Rights Committee.