

High Representative issues Decision ensuring transparency in the use of funds for return of refugees and displaced persons in both Entities

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, on Thursday issued a [Decision](#) requiring Ministers in both Entities to notify the BiH Minister for Human Rights and Refugees on the use of funds allocated to refugee return. In addition, the Decision requires the Republika Srpska authorities to examine whether the funds allocated in the draft budget for refugee return are sufficient for the RS to carry out its obligations under the Dayton Peace Agreement. In this context, the High Representative welcomed the fact that Prime Minister Ivanic had expressed his readiness to expand by four million KM the funds allocated so far for refugee return in the RS 2002 budget.

In his Decision, the High Representative finds that the return of refugees and DPs, and the provision of economic and social conditions conducive to return, is of vital national interest for all constituent peoples.

The High Representative's Decision has been issued in response to an application lodged with the High Representative by three members of the RS Constitutional Commission, who invoked vital national interest to veto the proposed 2002 RS budget. They maintain that insufficient funds have been allocated to

returns to the RS in the 2002 budget, and that funds allocated to minority returns in the 2000 and 2001 RS budgets have not been spent.

The High Representative's Decision resolves the issue on which the veto was based and allows the RSNA to move forward with its budget debate.

The Decision requires the RS Government to provide all information needed by the RS National Assembly to determine whether funds allocated to the return of refugees and DPs under the proposed budget are sufficient for the RS to fulfill its Annex 7 obligations. This investigation is to be conducted at the next session of the RSNA.

In order to ensure transparency in budget execution, the Decision also requires Ministers from both Entities responsible for issues relating to refugee return to notify on a quarterly basis, beginning 1 March 2002, the BiH Minister for Human Rights and Refugees on their expenditure on refugee return. This notification will include specific information on the implementation of budgetary lines, the establishment of alternative accommodation, and the closure of collective centres.