

High Representative reiterates IC's commitment to commemorating Srebrenica massacre and to building a future for the town

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today visited Srebrenica, and Burnice, a return site in Bratunac Municipality, where the Austrian NGO, "Bauern Helfen Bauern" (Farmers for Farmers) is helping to regenerate the community. The High Representative met with Srebrenica Mayor Sefket Hafizovic, and with people involved in return activities. The High Representative stressed that return is central to the recovery of this area, which witnessed the worst atrocity of the war in BiH. "There can be no Bosnia and Herzegovina without the restored community of Srebrenica. It is where the worst has happened that people need to show their best," the High Representative said.

On his arrival in Srebrenica the High Representative visited the Potocari Memorial and Cemetery. The High Representative notes with satisfaction that the Foundation of the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery, set up by him last year and whose Executive Board he chairs, has been recently registered in accordance with the State Level Law on Foundations and Associations of BiH. The Foundation will receive the registration number 1 under this law, which came into force in January this year. Registration allows the Foundation to conduct activities across the whole territory of BiH. The High Representative's extensive involvement has been linked to his firm belief that burying the victims of Srebrenica, according to the proper rites and customs, and honouring their memory with dignity, is a moral obligation. If BiH is to move

forward, it must come to terms with its past – nowhere is this more true than in this town. It is the High Representative's continuing wish that the Memorial and Cemetery will help the survivors and relatives of the victims of the 1995 massacre to come to terms with that terrible event.

The rate of return to Srebrenica was for a long time unacceptably slow, as a result of obstructionism, neglect and inefficiency. However, the High Representative noted that the climate has improved significantly, and the commitment of the International Community to the area has never been greater, as was shown by the US\$ 5.2 million raised at the UN/UNDP Donors conference for Srebrenica only a week ago in New York.

After touring the town centre with Mayor Hafizovic, the High Representative stressed the importance of the international action plan for the return of refugees and displaced persons to Srebrenica and the surrounding area, which provides for rebuilding the economic and civic infrastructure so as to enable sustainable return. Jobs have to be created in order to support returnees, and every effort must be made to foster economic regeneration appropriate to a population whose needs and capabilities have been drastically altered. Females now head many families from this area. Every opportunity which may exist for these women to maintain themselves and their families must be explored in a creative and positive manner.

Creating a reassuring environment for potential returnees and one in which all the town inhabitants will see a future is essential. The High Representative called upon the political leaders of Srebrenica seriously to consider returning to the area permanently in order to present an example in the spirit of good leadership and their commitment to the future of Srebrenica.