High Representative welcomes New York Declaration

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, welcomes the New York Declaration made by the Joint Presidency of BiH. Aside from reaffirming their commitment to the Dayton Accords, the Presidency made a number of important agreements intended to strengthen the role of the Joint Presidency, and to further the achievement of Dayton's goals.

Last week, in his address to the United Nations Security Council, the High Representative specifically drew attention, among other things, to the Joint Presidency's disappointing response to the draft State Border Service law.

As the declaration notes, the draft State Border Service law will now be submitted to the BiH Parliament by November 24, and the first units of the new Border Service will be deployed by 31 December.

On other matters, the High Representative welcomes the Joint Presidency's intention to establish a Permanent Secretariat by March 01. Such a secretariat should greatly assist in the implementation of Joint Presidential decisions.

He welcomes the Joint Presidency's recognition of the importance of the State ministries, and their commitment to secure the necessary resources for these ministries by March 01; their reaffirmation of support for adoption of the Permanent Election Law; and their expression of intent to seek improved inter-Entity military cooperation.

The Joint Presidency also endorsed the package of property law reforms announced by the High Representative last month. They agreed to establish a joint commission of the entities, tasked with establishing refugee return priorities, which will report on its progress to the UNSC by March 01. In addition, the

Joint Presidency agreed to put pressure on the Entity governments to provide additional staffing, funding and facilities for its Ministries of Refugees.

The High Representative also welcomes the Joint Presidency's renewed commitment to the creation of a single BiH passport.

Finally, the High Representative welcomes the Joint Presidency's acknowledgement that corruption and transparency are serious problems that block BiH's economic development, as well as their support for aggressive steps to combat these problems.

It is encouraging to see such a spirit of co-operation among the co-Presidents. It is now time that actions supported words. The High Representative is very much looking forward to working with the co-Presidents for the achievement of their new goals in the coming months.