

High Representative's visit to Travnik

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today visited Travnik, where he opened the new OHR office in the town and held talks with Canton Six officials.

The High Representative was briefed, during his meeting with officials, on the returns process, the Canton's difficult budget situation and its fiscal policy.

In his remarks at the opening of the OHR office, the High Representative emphasized the fact that return depends on the rule of law, including property law implementation, and on the integrity of institutions, including efficient and impartial town hall administration and professional policing. "These criteria have largely been met in Canton Six", he said.

Noting that the 1999 Property Laws have provided the local authorities with the legal infrastructure to facilitate return, the High Representative pointed to the fact that in 2001 most municipalities, and the Canton itself, had allocated funding for alternative accommodation.

The High Representative noted that the Federation is seeking to improve its tax collection regime, which will eventually generate much-needed income. "There has been a tendency for Cantons to resist more effective Entity taxation and instead promote their own local property taxes," he said. "Yet, if local property taxes are excessively high, they will hinder the private sector's capacity to deliver an economic upturn, and it is exactly this upturn which will in due course provide the Cantons with the income they need to support adequate schools, public amenities, policing, and all the other

services which citizens have a right to expect from their local authorities.”

The High Representative expressed his thanks to Ulrich Bucher, Head of the new OHR Canton Six Office. Mr Bucher supervised the closing of the Bugojno Special Envoy’s office and the relocation of its staff to the new premises in Travnik. The OHR Canton Six Office will also serve as the premises for the Reconstruction and Return Task Force staff in Travnik, who were previously accommodated elsewhere in the town. This consolidation of resources, the High Representative said, may serve as a model for the streamlining exercise which will shortly get underway throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina with the objective of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the International Community even as funds allocated to BiH decline.

The High Representative concluded his visit with a short sightseeing tour of the old part of Travnik in the company of his wife, Nora Petritsch.