

High Representatives welcomes Formation of new Council of Ministers

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, welcomes the formation of the new Council of Ministers, which was voted in today by the BiH House of Representatives.

More than three months after the elections, it is high time the state government was established. The High Representative hopes that the new Council of Ministers will move swiftly to tackle all the problems that Bosnia and Herzegovina faces, guiding it through the difficult transition and reform processes that the country is undergoing.

It is of particular importance that the government aligns its policies with the priorities outlined in the Brussels Declaration of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) from May 2000: economic reform, return and property repossession, and strengthening of the state institutions.

Elaborating on the PIC Declaration, the political directors of the PIC Steering Board, at their session in Brussels on December 7, 2001, called for action in the following areas: economic reform, the building of a functioning state, co-operation in the field of defence, the development of a common defence policy and the reduction of defence expenditures, the fight against corruption, co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague, improvement in co-operation with neighboring states, minority return, property law implementation and the creation of conditions conducive to return, the implementation of the Constitutional Court's ruling on the constituent status of all BiH peoples and citizens in both Entities, the fight against illegal migration through Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the reconstruction of all

significant places of worship and historical and religious monuments.

Most of these points simultaneously represent the requirements of the "EU Road Map", the fulfilment of which the EU expects by the middle of 2001 and which will lead to closer ties between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU. They also represent the preconditions for Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the Council of Europe.

The situation in the region has dramatically improved with the democratic changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Croatia. Bosnia and Herzegovina now has to compete for both aid and investment. The delay in forming the Council of Ministers did not reflect well on Bosnia and Herzegovina. The High Representatives hopes that the new Council – which, for the first time since the signing of the Dayton Accords, includes exclusively representatives of parties that fully embrace the State of BiH and are reform-oriented – will break with the policies of the past and lead Bosnia and Herzegovina actively and decisively into a better future. He has assisted in the formation of the "Alliance for Change" and is ready to assist the Council of Ministers in coping with the huge tasks ahead. Their completion will benefit the country and all its citizens.

The High Representative calls upon all parties that are not included in the new Council of Ministers to support the reform agenda. He also expects to see the formation of all outstanding legislative and executive institutions without any further delay.