

Human Rights Priorities for 2002 endorsed

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, the BiH Minister for Human Rights and Refugees, Krešimir Zubak, the Head of Mission of the OSCE in BiH, Robert Beecroft and representatives from other international organisations, BiH human rights institutions and domestic NGOs met today at the OHR, where they reviewed and endorsed '[Human Rights in BiH – Priorities for 2002](#)', a document compiled by the Human Rights Coordination Centre.

'Priorities for 2002' presents a combined review by the international agencies in BiH of activities and developments during the previous year, and, on the basis of this review, an agreed action plan identifying priorities for the current year.

The five identified priorities for this year are; sustainable return, education, reform of the Police and the Judiciary, capacity building of domestic partners and the protection of minorities from discrimination.

The High Representative noted that this year further measures must be taken to ensure that large-scale return, the pace of which has markedly increased in the last 24 months, can be sustained. Returnees must have full and equal access to education, employment, welfare services, and utilities, be free from persecution and have confidence that law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and the government will protect them and their rights.

Although the situation has been substantially improved recently, respect for the rule of law and fundamental human rights in BiH remains poor. BiH's accession to the Council of Europe later this month includes the obligation to actively

foster more democratic governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Accession represents an obligation on the part of the BiH State and Entity authorities to strive even harder to ensure and maintain fundamental freedoms and human rights. This obligation also forms the very foundation of the BiH Constitution, which enshrines internationally recognised human rights conventions.

The High Representative welcomed the robust efforts being made in this field by domestic institutions, particularly the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, noting that “the IC has a productive partnership with this Ministry and Minister Zubak. There is no more important area for ownership to develop than in the field of protecting citizen’s human rights.”