

Making Housing More Accessible to BiH Citizens

Speaking at the CHF International's Housing Development Conference in Sarajevo, Principle Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays highlighted that the creation of a vibrant property market in BiH requires a secure system of property ownership through modernized regulations and the resolution of the property disputes that currently inhibit the growth of this sector. "A home is one of the core human requirements and in Bosnia and Herzegovina access to adequate housing must be one of the main priorities" said Ambassador Hays, on Friday.

"As a critical indicator of a country's progress in the transition process, today it is clear that BiH is effectively moving from a time when socially owned housing was a key component of the country's housing stock, to a situation where individual ownership, based on personal investment, or bank mortgages prevails" Ambassador Hays said.

Essential to this process is the development of new legislation on real property ownership. The focus of these draft laws would include the transformation of rights deriving from social property into ownership rights, real estate unity of title, the acquisition of real estate ownership rights in BiH by foreigners and the transformation of social ownership. The resolution of the restitution question will also support the development of a housing market by providing citizens and lenders with greater security in respect to title and right of possession.

"For most people much depends on the banking sector in BiH, which is already beginning to fulfil its role as a capital provider for the housing sector – but interest rates on loans remain high by European standards. These levels must be made

affordable for all BiH's citizens" Ambassador Hays said. He added that; "banks in this country need security, but given the experience of small lender activity where well over 90% of all loans are repaid, I would urge greater initiative and pro-activity on the banks part in order to stimulate property market sector of the economy."

Principle Deputy High Representative underlined that BiH's governing institutions must play its proper role in this transition and engage as a proactive player in housing development. "If BiH's governments and institutions show that they are willing to tackle these issues, they will be met with support and assistance from the International Community" said Ambassador Hays.