

# **OHR and OSCE continue to insist on Adoption of Election Law**

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Robert Barry, have reminded the BiH Parliament of its continuing responsibility to adopt an election law. They sent a letter underlining this obligation to the Collegium of the BiH House of Representatives last Friday.

Upon the recommendation of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council and after approval by the Permanent Council of the OSCE, general elections might be held in Bosnia and Herzegovina this autumn under the OSCE mandate and in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Provisional Election Commission.

However, this would not relieve the BiH Parliament of its duty to pass an election law, which is fundamental legislation to any free and democratic state. The adoption of an election law remains a key test of the commitment of Bosnia and Herzegovina to joining the Council of Europe.

This law must include the critical democratic reforms incorporated in the law drafted by the Permanent Election Law Working Group. Preferential voting, multi-member constituencies and open lists were among the key provisions agreed on by domestic and international experts. They are indispensable components for future democratic progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina and cannot be sacrificed for the sake of political expediency.

The adoption of an election law that promotes democracy as well as mutual respect will require courage and sacrifice by the members of different political parties and constituent

peoples. However, no meaningful legislation can be adopted without the political will to compromise.

The High Representative and Ambassador Barry have urged the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take up the latest version of the election law drafted by the Permanent Election Law Working Group, as resubmitted to the Parliamentary Assembly on 15 February, and to consider that law without delay.