

OHR hosts the Second Federation Anti-Corruption Conference

The Office of the High Representative today hosted the second Federation Anti-Corruption Conference, in Sarajevo. The object of the conference, in which Federation Prosecutor, Finance Police, Cantonal prosecutor, Federal Customs administration, Tax Administration, Supreme Audit institutions, Federal Banking Agency, Ministry for Internal Affairs participated, was to assess the status of investigations into 74 cases of serious corruption committed in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a number of its Canton in 2000 and identified by OHR and OSCE-led audits in 2001.

The OHR took note that under the supervision of Federation Prosecutor Marinko Jurcevic, progress has been achieved. Several of the investigations have led to charges being filed in court. The OHR expressed its full support for the work of the Federation Prosecutor and his office, and acknowledged that the quantity and complexity of the cases under review has meant that some of the investigations have not yet been completed. It is expected that many more cases will have been completed when the next conference is held.

However, the OHR remains concerned by inadequate staff numbers at the respective law enforcement agencies, in particular the Federation Finance Police. This is one of the main obstacles to the rapid and successful completion of corruption investigations. The competent government departments must take this into account since they carry the responsibility for failing to equip the law enforcement agencies adequately.

Serious concern remains with regard to the lack of progress achieved by the investigating agencies in certain Cantons, especially in Canton 7.

Transparency in the public sector is an obligation that government agencies have towards the citizens of this country, and ensuring that public funds are protected is a basic function of democratic governance. The investigation and prosecution of cases of abuse of public funds is a central element in the fight against corruption. Any deficiencies in this regard must be tackled with thoroughness and determination.

The first Anti-Corruption Conference took place last August and marked the beginning of the effort of all the relevant institutions to co-ordinate their work in battling corruption.