

OHR, OSCE and UNHCR remind local authorities of the need to plan for social welfare housing

On 20 March 2003, OHR, OSCE and UNHCR sent a letter to Ministers of both Entities competent for social welfare, urban planning, displaced persons and refugees issues urging them to adequately plan for a fully functioning social welfare system. This letter was a timely reminder of the pressing needs, especially in light of the expected completion of the property law implementation by the end of 2003, in accordance with the PLIP New Strategic Direction.

There are several categories of people currently housed in alternative accommodation whose homes were completely destroyed and who have been unable to find reconstruction assistance. Others had never possessed any property or had benefited from the social welfare system before the war. In all cases of people who have no prospect of being able to provide for their own housing needs, alternative accommodation under the property repossession laws is not an appropriate long-term solution. OHR, OSCE and UNHCR also called upon the competent ministries to provide social support to the growing number of people who are not legally entitled to temporary accommodation under the property and displaced person laws, but remain without resources to house themselves.

OHR, OSCE and UNHCR urged the competent Ministers to anticipate these issues and begin instituting measures that would ensure a seamless transition from provision of alternative accommodation under the property repossession laws to effective long-term social policies. Such measures should include both a review of the current legal framework regarding

social welfare and a realistic assessment of the resources necessary to meet anticipated needs.