

Judicial Partnership Forum Established

The first meeting took place yesterday in Sarajevo of the recently established Judicial Partnership Forum. This inaugural meeting was co-ordinated by the Independent Judicial Commission and participants included members of various legislative bodies, Ministries and the judiciary. Among those attending were representatives of the Federation House of Peoples and the RS National Assembly, the Deputy Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications, both Entity Ministers of Justice and the presidents of the associations of judges and prosecutors from each Entity.

The Forum aims to bring together all the influential actors in the field of judicial reform throughout the country. "A partnership between domestic and international agencies will be essential for Bosnia and Herzegovina to be able to implement all of the judicial and legal reforms required before Bosnia and Herzegovina can be fully integrated in Europe," said Judge Rakel Surlien, Director of the Independent Judicial Commission, "This Forum is a good start for that partnership."

Discussion at the meeting covered a wide range of judicial reform issues, including implementation of the Council of Europe accession requirements, co-ordination of judicial reform strategy and how to achieve an independent and impartial judiciary. It was agreed that the substantial and urgent efforts are needed to carry out the work which must be done in order to achieve these goals and also to win public trust in the judiciary, which is lacking at the moment. Establishing the rule of law through an effective judiciary is fundamental to the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina and

to the success of reforms in other sectors such as the economy and refugee return.

The Forum concluded that the governments at the State and Entity level need to work closely together on judicial reform and also to ensure that the public is informed about the process.

The members of the Forum agreed to meet again in the new year.