OHR: Agreed Statement – Geneva, 2/6/96

Agreed Statement

Geneva, 2 June 1996

The three Presidents and signatories of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnian President Izetbegovic, Croatian President Tudjman and Serbian President Milosevic, met in Geneva on June 2 at the invitation of Secretary of State Christopher with the support of the Contact Group governments for a continuation of their discussions on steps needed to move forward with the peace process.

Also attending the gathering were High Representative Carl Bildt, OSCE Chairman-in Office, Swiss Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti and OSCE Mission Head Robert Frowick, Supreme Allied Commander General George Joulwan and IFOR Commander Admiral Leighton Smith, and representatives of Contact Group countries and international organizations participating in implementation of the Agreement.

Noting that this was one of a series of meetings that will take place during June, including the Berlin Contact Group Ministerial, the Florence Mid-Term Review Conference and the Lyon Summit, which will provide added impetus to the peace process, the Presidents and the representatives of the entities welcomed the continued, active engagement of the Contact Group and the international community. They also expressed full support for the work of the High Representative and the Implementation Force.

Joined by representatives of the two Bosnian entities, the

Presidents emphasized that the most important next step in the peace process will be to hold free and fair elections within the time period established by the Agreement. They recommitted themselves to the task of establishing the necessary conditions for these elections under the supervision of the OSCE. Delay in the elections risks widening the divisions which continue to exist.

The Presidents and Entity representatives stressed that free and fair elections will provide a democratic mandate for the governmental institutions to be established within the Entities and at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They stressed their common conviction that rapid establishment of these institutions is essential if the process of building a democratic society which enjoys the support of all the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina is to succeed.

Having consulted with the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and OSCE Mission Head, the three Presidents and the Entity delegations endorsed the announcement of a date on which elections will be held on the basis of the conditions specified by the OSCE and the Agreement. In their view, establishment of a specific date will provide a focus for the work remaining to achieve the full standards established by the OSCE. Achievement of these standards is essential for the holding of free and fair elections.

The Presidents and Entity representatives also agreed to a series of concrete steps to help meet the standards established by the OSCE. They agreed that full respect for the rules and regulations established by the Provisional Election Commission on the basis of the peace agreement will be necessary if the elections are to meet these standards and welcomed the assistance of the OSCE and other international organizations in providing assistance to the parties in creating the conditions for elections.

In recognition of their responsability for creating momentum

for peace, the Presidents and Entity representatives, along with the other participants, also agreed that establishment of a lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina requires full implementation of all provisions of the Agreement, in addition to those concerning elections. They committed themselves to building confidence among the communities and peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the peace process and agreed to refrain from any statement or action which might undermine implementation of the peace agreement.

They noted in particular:

- The obligations of all Parties to fully cooperate in the investigation of war crimes and prosecution of all persons indicted for war crimes and to abide by the prohibition on persons indicted by the War Crimes Tribunal for war crimes seeking and holding an appointive, elective or other public office in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The need for more concerted efforts to ensure freedom of movement and facilitate the return of refugees, recognizing that the right to move freely and without fear throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina is a cornerstone of elections and of a lasting peace. Toward this end, they agreed to work strictly within the UNHCR guidelines to make more substantial progress in this area, cooperating closely with UNHCR, IFOR and the International Police Task Force. They noted the agreement signed on May 29, 1996 by Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland, and Germany relating to the terms of refugee return.
- The obligation to provide free and equal access to the media in compliance with relevant OSCE regulations, not only for effective conduct of the elections but also for the establishment of a democratic society throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region as a whole.
- The necessity of commencing the Brcko Area Arbitration

as stipulated in Annex II, Article 5 of the Agreement and the value of securing an early solution in the interests of a lasting peace. They welcomed the appointment of the arbitrator from the Federation and undertook to encourage agreement on the other two arbitrators quickly.

- The importance of concluding Arms Control talks under Article IV of the Agreement. The presidents underscored the urgency of achieving an agreement in advance of the June 11 deadline and have directed their negotiators to reach an agreement this week.
- The importance of the international community's economic reconstruction program in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They welcomed the efforts made by the international community thus far, looked forward to full implementation of the reconstruction program and urged an acceleration of the realization of pledges.

Office of the High Representative