

Travnik Meeting Explores Ways of Broadening Impact of, Participation in Bulldozer Initiative

Chairpersons of the Regional Bulldozer Committees, and representatives of business organisations, trades union and businesspeople met at the Olip Shoe Factory in Travnik on Friday to discuss ways of broadening the impact of the Bulldozer Initiative and expanding participation in it.

The Bulldozer chairs briefed the meeting on the work done by their committees since the Bulldozer Initiative was launched at the end of 2002. A total of 50 Phase I reforms were secured by the summer of 2003. Phase II, which has seen the International Community take a back seat as the Bulldozer Process begins to move forward under its own momentum, has produced a further 50 reforms, which will be discussed with the State, Entity and Brcko leadership at a plenary meeting in Jajce next Wednesday. These 50 reforms are expected to be enacted this summer. Phase III will be launched later this month.

At Friday's meeting, continuing and damaging impediments to doing business in BiH were discussed; these include inconsistent and therefore unfair collection of taxes and fees, an inadequate transportation system, and the problems associated with a fractured economic space – a Single Economic Space is a minimum requirement for BiH's economic recovery.

The establishment of 15 commercial chambers in BiH by the end of this month was welcomed as a positive contribution to the business environment and one which could help attract desperately needed investment, and there was a common view

that commercial interest rates must come down if the small and medium-sized enterprise sector is to take off.

Several business representatives expressed the view that Bulldozer and the Regional Development Agencies, which are increasingly associated with it, should address macroeconomic and policy issues since the Bulldozer's focus on specific, enactable reforms necessarily limits the breadth of its impact. Discussion of this basic issue will be part of the strategic preparations for the launch of Bulldozer Phase III.

Participants emphasised that while domestic ownership of the Bulldozer Process is being consolidated the International Community must remain fully supportive of the process.