OHR’s Statement at the International Agencies’ Joint Press Conference in Banja Luka

Poverty beginning to decrease

The BiH Development Strategy interim monitoring results, which show, among other things, that poverty is at last beginning to decrease, are an important sign of positive change.Many citizens will greet this information with skepticism as living conditions do not seem to have improved – which is why the authorities have to make sure that benefits reach as many people as possible as quickly as possible.

After years of stagnation and endemic poverty, economic reforms are beginning to deliver results.

Nobody should be in any doubt, however – poverty and unemployment remain the biggest threat to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and eliminating these twin scourges are – or should be – the top priority of the governments and parliaments.

The reforms that have started to raise living standards are reforms that take BiH closer to Europe. The authorities must not now jeopardise the modest but important progress that has been made. Euro-integration and maintaining the momentum of economic reform are the only way to move BiH decisively and permanently from the terrible grip of poverty.

The monitoring results show that there is a growing disproportion between the average income in the RS and FBiH. Salaries have risen faster and more jobs have been created in

the Federation than in the RS. The unemployment rate in RS is growing in comparison to the Federation. This points up the urgency of consolidating the Single Economic Space and removing political obstacles to reforms that will create jobs in the RS. The agenda is clear: politicians have to implement this agenda with less dithering and with greater competence.