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

High Representative Extends Naturalisation Review Commission Mandate

The High Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, has extended the mandate of the BiH Commission for the Review of Decisions on Naturalisation of Foreign Citizens for one year.

The High Representative was obliged to make this move because the Commission’s mandate was expiring at the end of this week and domestic authorities were not in a position to extend it. The Commission’s mandate will now run until 16 February 2008.

Earlier this week, the Office of the High Representative warned that the Commission had not completed its work because of the number of cases that required review. The Commission had some 1,320 cases to review. Of these, decisions have been handed down in 856 cases, with 465 still to be completed.

The review process is part of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s effort to build confidence in its citizenship and naturalisation practices in the European Union and elsewhere, which should help the visa facilitation process.

The High Representative issued a Decision in this instance

because he considers the Commission’s work to be critical to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s stability and the country’s ability to combat organised crime and international terrorism.

Under normal circumstances, the country’s Parliamentary Assembly would extend the Commission’s mandate. Since the state-level House of Peoples has yet to be formed, this was not possible.

The Commission was established by the Council of Ministers on 16 February 2006 with a one-year mandate to review naturalisations of foreign citizens that took place between 6 April 1992 and 1 January 2006.