

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

## *High Representative Lifts Bans on Holding Public Office Against Four Individuals*

The High Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling today lifted bans on holding public office against four individuals who had been removed by earlier High Representatives for obstructing peace implementation.

The individuals are Ivan Mandic, Emin Skopljak Ahmed Smajic and Mirko Stojcinovic.

The lifting the bans against removed individuals does not return them to the positions from which they were removed. The removal of an OHR ban does not automatically mean that a particular individual can participate in full in public life. Rather, it means that it is no longer the OHR's responsibility to decide whether a person can participate or not.

Political parties have to decide whether to put these individuals forward for party office, elections, government positions and appointed office. And institutions have to decide, in accordance with the law, whether to appoint them.

Removals have played an important role in helping BiH emerge from the aftermath of war. It is widely accepted – by the Venice Commission among others – that the removal of obstructionist officials has helped take the peace process forward.

However, as BiH meets its Dayton obligations and moves towards Euro-Atlantic integration, there are compelling reasons why these bans should be lifted. The issue of removed officials must be addressed now and resolved before the OHR closes.

The lifting of removal decisions in no way calls into question any possible judicial processes that may be ongoing against the individuals concerned.

ICTY-related removals are not included in this process. They form a distinct category because

full ICTY cooperation remains is a fundamental Dayton obligation.