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

Parliamentarians Must Think About Citizens’ Benefits Not Their Own

The Administrative Committee of the BiH House of Representatives will meet tomorrow to discuss the Law on the Rights and Responsibilities of Parliamentarians.

This law, which would give Members of Parliament pension payments and other benefits well in excess of those enjoyed by other citizens, has already been the subject of considerable popular indignation. Critics have asked whether parliamentarians have *earned* the right to give themselves generous pensions and other benefits, relative to what other citizens can expect to receive. As of today, no satisfactory answer has been forthcoming from Members of Parliament.

In fact, if we look at the performance of parliamentarians in recent months we can see an obvious and urgent need to increase productivity. On 24 May the High Representative laid before parliament a legislative agenda, which could be enacted before the October elections. The laws itemized in this agenda would bring real benefits – in many cases within a very short period of time – to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina . The Higher Education Law will harmonise standards for courses and examinations across all universities in BiH, a precondition for the Bologna process; the Law on Obligations will modernise the commercial code and thus encourage investment and help create jobs; legislation to centralise the banking supervision system, will further protect the savings of small depositors. The Pharmaceuticals Law will create the conditions in which medicines available in BiH can be properly

inspected for quality and competitively priced.

Yet, with the exception of belated progress on the Pharmaceuticals Law, Parliament (the same Parliament which is currently considering improving benefits to its members) has failed to move forwards with this People's Agenda.

There is still time. Parliamentarians still have it within their power to deliver benefits to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina before the October election.

But they will only do this if they focus on citizens' benefits rather than their own.