

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference

BiH to Become Member of Council of Europe Development Bank

The OHR welcomes the fact that BiH now has in place the funding to exercise its right as a member of the Council of Europe to become a shareholder in the CoE Development Bank (CEB). This means that we are on track for transferring the responsibility on refugee returns to BiH authorities by the end of this year.

The British government confirmed on Friday that it will contribute 40 percent of the first installment of BiH's fee for membership of the CEB.

The government of Sweden had earlier already committed 40 percent, and the BiH Central Bank will pay the remaining 20 percent. This means that BiH can now go forward and become a full member of the CEB.

CEB membership will provide the BiH authorities with funding that will enable them to continue the return process and achieve substantial completion of Annex VII by the end of 2006, which is the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees strategy.

Set up in 1956, the CEB is the only European international financial institution, which has an exclusively social function. It provides the financial mechanisms through which the CoE projects its solidarity policies. It is a multilateral development bank with statutory priorities such as aid to refugees, migrants and victims of natural or ecological disasters.

As international funding declines, membership of the CEB will offer BiH

enormous assistance in financing the return process, by giving the country access to new favorable loans.

At the end of this year the first major transfer of responsibility to the domestic institutions will occur, when the International Community closes the Reconstruction and Return Task Force. The IC will not withdraw completely from the return process, as an Annex 7 Verification Unit will be formed and the OHR will continue to monitor returns.

High Representative to Visit Tuzla and Brcko

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, today visits Tuzla and Brcko. In Tuzla, the High Representative will meet representatives of the regional Bulldozer Committee, who will brief him on the work that has gone into preparing 50 new reforms to be presented to the BiH authorities, next week, under Bulldozer Phase II.

The High Representative will travel from Tuzla to Brcko by train. En route, he will be briefed by members of the Brcko Emergency Reform Unit (ERU). The ERUs consist of civil servants seconded by their departments to work with the Bulldozer Committees and ensure that Phase II reforms are processed efficiently and effectively. The ERUs will be the Bulldozer Committees' principal partners in government.

SDHR Wnendt to visit Banja Luka and Cantons 1 & 10

Senior Deputy High Representative Ambassador Werner Wnendt will visit Banja Luka and Cantons 1 & 10 on 5 through 7 November where he will discuss return related issues with relevant ministers and other domestic officials. He will point that the transfer of return process is on track for the end of this year and the laws are now updated to create new institutions at state and local level. More details to follow in Media advisory during the day.