

Press Conference by Principal Deputy HR on Rights and Responsibilities of Parliamentarians

Thank you for coming.

I wanted to meet you here this afternoon because this is really the optimal place to discuss the rights and responsibilities of Parliamentarians.

As you know, members of the parliaments in BiH have discussed legislation that would give themselves more generous compensation packages than those that are available to the vast majority of BiH citizens.

Tomorrow the BiH House of Representatives, at its last session before the summer recess, will debate the Law on the Rights and Responsibilities of Parliamentarians, and if the delegates approve the text it can be considered by the House of Peoples on Thursday.

Now, it's interesting that parliamentary time has been found to debate this bill – which will benefit parliamentarians – when there is insufficient time to debate other bills – which will benefit citizens.

Its also worth noting that the proponents of this bill come from a broad range of parties, from the SDA, the SDS , the SBiH, the HDZ 1990, and the DNZ, as well as independent delegates. While cross-party cooperation is routinely elusive when it comes to enacting major reforms, it turns out to be within reach when it comes to improving pensions for parliamentarians.

Let me remind you of the legislative agenda which the High Representative laid before this parliament on 24 May this year.

He noted that there is strong popular and political support for

- a Higher Education Law – to give all young people a level playing field in which to study
- a Law on Obligations – to attract investment and create jobs
- a Salary Law – to regulate and rationalize the salaries that citizens pay their civil servants throughout the country
- the creation of a Central Banking Supervision system – to further protect depositors
- a Law on National Fiscal Council – to improve BiH's international reputation and raise more money for investment; and
- a Pharmaceuticals Law – to make medicines in BiH safer and cheaper.

Well, as of today, in the final week that parliament sits before the summer recess, we have hopes that only one of those pieces of legislation will be enacted – the Law on Pharmaceuticals.

But the others – each of which in its own way could have made life better for BiH citizens – the others will have to wait! Parliament hasn't got round to enacting the necessary legislation.

Yet, consideration of the Law on the Rights and Responsibilities of Parliamentarians will not have to wait! The people's representatives have found time to discuss legislation that will have a positive financial impact on *them*, but have not found time to discuss legislation that will have a positive impact on the rest of the population.

Now, I am not the only person in BiH who is exercised about the Law on the Rights and Responsibilities of Parliamentarians.

There has been a huge outpouring of popular indignation. Critics have asked whether parliamentarians have *earned* the right to give themselves generous pensions and other benefits far beyond what citizens can expect to receive.

If we look at their recent record, we simply have to conclude that the answer is no. Therefore I would urge delegates meeting here tomorrow not to enact this piece of legislation.

I would urge them to put citizens' interests before their own.

Thank you