Remarks by Senior Deputy HR Werner Wnendt at an Event organized by the NGO “Children – the Pillars of the World”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate the NGO, “Children – the Pillars of the World”, on launching this event.

It is especially interesting that the opening comes just as another great and significant cultural event for Sarajevo – International Festival Sarajevo Winter – is closing.

Events such as these show that Sarajevo is one of the most active and lively cities in Europe when it comes to cultural activities. They are important because they draw positive attention to Sarajevo .

What sets this event apart from others is the fact that it is dedicated to children. Children really do represent the pillars of every society, as the name of your organization stipulates, and as such they deserve our special attention. Their upbringing and education are of vital importance for the future of this country as an integral part of the European family of nations.

I am pleased with the fact that you have decided to cover different aspects and influences on education and the upbringing of children. Starting from the role of family, the importance of health protection, the role of religion, science and politics, to media and culture.

All these aspects of society influence the development of a personality and it is important that children are aware of them and learn as much as possible about their significance at an early stage.

We hear from different reports written by domestic and international organizations that children and youth in many countries are discriminated against, that their rights are not respected, that they are not able to receive proper education. What we should be hearing more about is how to alter this state of affairs, and I believe that events such as this one today show a determination to change the situation for the better and enable the voice of young generations to be heard.

OHR is mostly seen as an international organization responsible for the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord. Even though our primary obligation is to work on state-building issues, we very much realize the importance of fostering civil society in BiH.

Activities organized by different NGOs reflect the strong presence of civil society in this country. Civil society represents the openness and democracy of every society and as such demands special attention.

Efforts such as yours show the ability of BiH civil society to organize large-scale events that will raise awareness of children’s rights, a subject that has unfortunately been neglected in the past.

I wish you every success in the activities you plan to implement and hope that this will only be the beginning of many similar events to come.

Thank you