Round table on return and reconstruction

A round table “Return of refugees and displaced persons – reconstruction as a precondition for return” was held in Mostar on July, 11 in the organization of Association of Citizens for Human Rights Protection and in the sponsorship of the Council of Europe and Austrian Government.

Among the many participants of the local, international and NGO communities, Nigel Moore, Head of RRTF of OHR Mostar and Murray McCullough, Head of the EC Mostar office talked about the investments of the IC in the reconstruction in the HN Canton from 1994 and the EU Administration to this day, as well as the reconstruction plans for the year 2000 and beyond. From 1994 till today the IC has invested about 600 million DM for the reconstruction in the area, out of which 28 million DM were invested into the housing unit reconstruction every year. Although these efforts have resulted in the positive changes in all areas of life and intensification of return, the IC is still dissatisfied with the poor implementation of the property laws throughout the country as well as with the non-return to the already reconstructed units.

Referring to the reconstruction plans for the following period, it was reinforced that the IC will certainly continue with its assistance and investments in the reconstruction, but the diminishing of international funds was also noted. This year the EC ensured the funds amounting to 12 million DM for the reconstruction in the HN Canton, but it is hoped that the additional funds will be acquired through bilateral agreements. Therefore the IC expects a larger engagement of all domestic structures in the property laws implementation as well as their consistent insistence on the return to the reconstructed units. Failure to do so will be a clear

illustration of the total disregard of the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Finally the participants concluded that it is necessary to animate all structures and establish co-operation at all levels on the return and reconstruction issues. It would be desirable that a consultative body is formed comprised of representatives of different structures who would offer realistic recommendations to the IC about directing their funds. Finally, the implementation of the property laws is in the exclusive competence of the local authorities, therefore the IC expects the implementation of laws without delay.