

Statement by the High Representative, Carl Bildt at the First Meeting of the Commission on the Real Property for Displaced Persons and Refugees in Sarajevo

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Sarajevo, 21 March 1996

These days, the process of peace implementation is moving into its next phase. The war has faded away and the military forces have returned to their barracks, but real peace is still elusive as the process of reintegration and reconciliation has barely started.

In the next phase of peace implementation, the different civilian, economic, political and humanitarian efforts will be increasingly important. And their success will be dependent in part on the efforts of the international community, but more importantly on the co-operation and will of the parties themselves.

It is of great significance, that the different long-term commissions provided for in the Peace Agreement have now been set up on schedule and are beginning to work. Today the first of them – which has taken the name Commission on Real Property for Displaced Persons and Refugees – is starting its work.

Nominated by the Federation, the Republika Srpska and the President of the European Court of Justice for Human Rights, its work will be a key element in the process of reintegration and reconciliation during the coming years. In its present form it will work during a first period of five years, after which responsibility for its work will pass entirely into the hands of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I attach great importance to the work of this commission. It will give to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina the possibility of pursuing their rights to property. It is important to all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina – be they here or in foreign countries – to know that they are entitled to obtain information on their rights, either in the return of their homes or in disposing of their property.

After four years of war, it is important to offer to the citizens a structural process on which all citizens can rely and which will operate throughout the country. The work of the Commission will give crucial push to the restoration of civil life across the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Commission has power not only through the Peace Agreement, but also by its independent nature, its balance and the presence in it of three highly competent international Commissioners. It is also important that the work of the Commission is fully supported by the Parties to the Peace Agreement.

The IOM has been instrumental in preparing for the setting up of the Commission, and we are grateful for their help.