

Zepce Negotiations

Intensive negotiations on the problems of Zepce municipality, led by Senior Deputy High Representative Hanns H. Schumacher, were held in a very constructive atmosphere at the SFOR base in Rajlovac.

The Office of the High Representative, while recognizing that a lot needs to be done in the coming week, remains confident that an overall agreement on Zepce is possible, and hopes that the negotiations can be concluded next Saturday, when all parties agreed to have another plenary meeting at the same venue.

A wide range of issues were covered yesterday, from joint municipal administration to education to the integration of the whole of Zepce municipality in cantonal structures. The parties agreed that the OHR/OSCE arbitration awards will remain the basis for further discussion on a joint municipal administration. Border issues were also discussed, based on the principles accepted by everyone that the territorial integrity of Zepce must remain untouched. General principles were agreed, such as that political changes in Zepce municipality must not go to the detriment of private business. In the coming days, experts and two working groups are going to prepare elements of an overall agreement.

The OHR remains convinced that an overall settlement can only be found if a majority among all ethnic groups in the area supports it. Finding a consensus that the citizens of Zepce, Maglaj and Zavidovici can live with is the only possible way forward.

The OHR is grateful to all the parties for their serious participation in a long and exhausting meeting and calls on them to remain committed so these negotiations can be concluded successfully.