

Ambassadors' Tour of Return Areas

The High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, COMSF0R, General John B. Sylvester and UNHCR Chief of Mission Werner Blatter have invited ambassadors of countries assisting with the return process to visit by helicopter key areas of return across the country on Tuesday, 30 April 2002. The tour had to be postponed due to bad weather.

The aim of the tour is to view progress in the return of displaced persons and refugees, including the implementation of property legislation, and to hear first hand from returnees about their problems and concerns.

This is the fifth such visit (previous tours took place in September 1999, March 2000, August 2000 and June 2001), designed to promote a greater understanding of the return process and the problems facing those returning. This year's visit is of even greater significance, as the year 2001 has seen a substantial rise in returns. Nearly 100.000 minority returns were registered in the course of last year. A precondition for successful return, in particular to urban areas, remains the strict and efficient implementation of the property laws.

Ambassadors or representatives of more than 20 nations will participate in the tour. Separated into three groups and accompanied by the High Representative, SF0R Commanders, and UNHCR's Chief of Mission, as well as staff from the respective agencies, they will visit a total of six return sites: Bukova Grada (Orasje Municipality) and Hajdarevici (Zvornik Municipality) in MND North, Ogleceva (Srpsko Gorazde Municipality) and Kula/Cicevo (Konjic Municipality) in MND Southeast, and Orahova (Gradiska Municipality) and Vlasic

Plateau (Travnik Municipality) in MND Southwest.

Unfortunately, seats on the helicopters are limited, but journalists are encouraged to visit the sites at the time of the visit. For exact timing, locations and other details, please contact the following:

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