

# **December 19 Deadline for Filing Claims to Repossess Socially Owned Apartments in the RS Extended**

Today, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, has issued a Decision extending by four months the December 19 deadline for filing claims for the restoration of occupancy rights to socially owned apartments in Republika Srpska. The new deadline is April 19, 2000.

The High Representative acknowledges that the process of registering claims for apartments in the RS has improved over the past six months. However, the lack of staff and basic materials in the municipal offices of the RS Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons, as well as administrative problems – in particular during the NATO operation in neighboring Yugoslavia – have made it difficult for claimants to submit their claims. The High Representative firmly believes that the rights of individuals must not be compromised by ineffective administrative structures.

The High Representative repeats his request to the RS Government to allocate sufficient resources to the Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons so that all potential claimants have the opportunity to submit their claims in the next four months and no further extension of the deadline be necessary. A substantial increase of funds is also necessary to ensure the speedy and efficient processing of claims and enforcement of decisions.

The RS Law on Amendments to the Law on the Cessation of the Application of the Law on the Use of Abandoned Property is amended in accordance with the High Representative's Decision

and enters into force on Monday, December 13. The High Representative has issued this Decision exercising the powers vested in him by Annex 10 of the Dayton Peace Agreement and by Article XI of the Conclusions of the Peace Implementation Council Conference held in Bonn in December 1997.