

High Representative comments on final election results

With the final results of the 2000 Municipal Elections now in, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, would like to congratulate the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their electoral authorities, on the creditable way that this crucial exercise in democracy has been carried out.

All the signs are that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are slowly turning away from the old wartime political agendas, which were dominated by ethnicity, and towards those political parties that have taken up issues of everyday concern to the country's citizens. This means issues such as housing, education, security and employment.

Today, as a result, a much greater variety of political opinion is represented in the country's municipal assemblies. Pluralism is always a sure sign of a maturing democracy. The High Representative, therefore, is much encouraged.

In the Bosniac constituencies of the Federation, the SDP, a modern, multiethnic party, has made significant advances in many cities, which OHR warmly welcomes.

In the Croat constituencies, the HDZ did well. However, the dramatic fall in voter turn-out in those areas suggests a general dissatisfaction with the policies of the dominant party.

In the RS, alternative parties such as the PDP also did well, adding to the variety of the political landscape there. And despite the exclusion of the radical SRS party from these elections, the SDS did not pick up as many votes as they might have expected.

All this suggests that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina

did indeed respond to the International Community's plea for them to "vote for change." The High Representative very much hopes that they will vote for more change in the general and presidential elections that are to come.