

High Representative Congratulates Party Leaders on Agreement Reforming Entity Constitutions

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, congratulates the leaders of the political parties on the agreement they signed early this morning. The new Entity Constitutions will turn Bosnia and Herzegovina into a truly multiethnic country, providing Bosniaks and Croats in the RS, and Serbs in the Federation with full representation and full protection of their rights. The amendment of the Entity Constitutions is the most serious challenge that BiH's leaders have faced since Dayton. "This is a truly historic moment in the short history of modern BiH. This agreement is the product of far-sightedness and courage among the political leaders of this country. The people of BiH can be proud of their leaders tonight," the High Representative said.

The party representatives have developed and agreed the mechanisms that will fully protect the vital interests of the constituent peoples in both Entities and ensure their full representation in the decision-making bodies. Representation has been addressed through a combination of parity, representation based on the latest census, and minimum quotas.

This agreement – and the way in which it has been reached – changes the political landscape of BiH. This country can now begin the journey back from chronic ethnic bitterness and division. It is bound for a European future; its multiethnic character has been turned once again into an asset. At last, political leaders, who have shown courage in reaching this

decision, can focus their energies on producing the prosperity, which the people of this country have been denied for so long.