

# **OHR's head of Banja Luka office, Ambassador Hancock, departs BiH**

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, is very grateful to Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Peter Hancock, for his hard work in the last year as head of the OHR's Banja Luka office.

During this Millenium year, Ambassador Hancock led OHR through many important events in Republika Srpska including municipal, parliamentary and RS presidential elections.

He played a key part in organizing the important five-year commemoration of the fall of Srebrenica in July. Ambassador Hancock was also in constant contact with all officials during the various RS government crises earlier this year. His year in Banja Luka also saw the rate of minority returns of refugees and displaced people increase significantly – a total of 20,575 registered minority returns to RS for the first 10 months of 2000. Ambassador Hancock also leaves BiH just before work looks set to begin on the reconstruction of the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka itself, a UNESCO Grade I site of historic importance which was destroyed by Serb forces during the war – a cause which he gave priority.

His contribution to the on-going implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement has been an important and lasting one. The High Representative wishes Ambassador Hancock well for the future, on this, his last day at work in Banja Luka.

Ambassador Hancock's successor will be announced in due course.