

# **PLIP principals condemn violation of the property laws by political pressure groups**

The High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, OSCE Ambassador to BiH Robert Beecroft, UNHCR Chief of Mission to BiH Werner Blatter, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General Jacques-Paul Klein and Executive Officer of the Commission for Real Property Claims of Displaced Persons and Refugees Steven Segal join in condemning the politically motivated attempts of war veterans and of similar groups to postpone legal evictions, which is undermining the rule of law throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Numerous political pressure groups, particularly war veterans and certain DP associations, are violating the property laws by demanding to remain illegally in homes belonging to others, to be given free land and to be built apartments. In fact, many of these persons have already repossessed their own pre-war homes or had them reconstructed with international funds. Nevertheless, many public officials give into these demands or, worse, actively encourage them. When their demands are not met, these groups threaten and physically attack housing officials, who are trying to carry out their legal duties. Public officials throughout BiH have failed to not only condemn these outrages, but also to prosecute the perpetrators.

Property law implementation is a crucial test of Bosnia and Herzegovina's ability to uphold the rule of law. If public officials want to see Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of a united Europe, the only way forward is a strict and full implementation of the property laws. We note that many of the

same public officials that are attempting to appease political pressure groups have not yet taken minimal steps to provide sufficient budgetary support for alternative accommodation. If Bosnian public officials continue to violate property rights for short-term gain, it is clear that they are leading BiH away from Europe. Mature political leadership is not afraid of undertaking difficult but necessary tasks, such as property law implementation, and properly informing their voters about them. We expect the current public officials at all levels of government to act accordingly.