

Providing of Alternative and Emergency accommodation is a budgetary priority

On November 5 Senior Deputy High Representative Ambassador Gerhard Enver Schrömbgens sent letters to the Entity Prime Ministers, the Prime Ministers of all Cantons, and to the Mayors of all Municipalities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These letters urge the BiH authorities to carry out an urgent assessment of, and provide adequate budgeting for, the alternative and emergency accommodation needs of people still occupying claimed property, and for continued reconstruction needs.

These needs are highlighted in the context of the New Strategic Direction on Property Law Implementation launched by the International Community, and now in force for nearly a month. This requires that authorities throughout the country respect the provisions in the property laws, which make the right to repossess independent of the provision of alternative accommodation for occupants of properties.

In a further appeal to the BiH authorities today, SDHR Schrömbgens said: "It is high time to complete the return process. The problems of Bosnia and Herzegovina's DPs and refugees, still waiting to return, must be overcome. There must be willingness on the part of the local authorities to spend what they must in order to solve the remaining caseload of property claims while ensuring that all those who continue in need are provided with the accommodation envisaged by law."

Ensuring this is a matter of urgency during the ongoing preparations for the budgets of 2003. All allocations of funds must be made in the knowledge that the process of reform is speeding up, and there can be no room for delay in bringing

about a normalized society, in which all property rights can be freely realized, and all hopes of return fulfilled. Every government at every level in this country, as it calculates what proportion of its revenues to spend on return next year, is required to demonstrate its full commitment to finalizing the process.