



## The Sarajevo Process

The fundamental consequence of the 1991-1995 conflict was the consolidation of Croatia's independence and territorial integrity. It also entailed the necessity for Croatia to make appropriate institutional adjustments to democratize the country in all its facets: political, judicial, police, media, and the development, *inter alia*, of a solid civil society.

Croatia also had to resolve two important issues that remained pending after the conflict: the return of refugees and the war crime trials. Since both issues had regional implications and demanded co-operation with neighbouring countries, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro (at the beginning together and later separately) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) initiated in 2005 separate consultative processes that were named after the cities where the first meetings took place: Sarajevo, the place of the formal opening of a debate on refugees at the ministerial level, and Palić, where legal experts initiated talks on judicial co-ordination. This article will concentrate on the first of the two.

Reunited in Sarajevo at the beginning of 2005, the ministers of the three countries (now four) decided to initiate a process aimed at resolving the immense problem of millions of refugees and displaced persons created by the conflict.

On Croatia's side alone, there were nearly 350,000 Croatian Serbs who left the country, about 90 per cent of them taking refuge in Serbia, the rest in Bosnia. There were an additional 220,000 Croats who moved away from the areas affected by the conflict, almost all of whom have returned to their homes so far. There were also up to 800,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina of different ethnicities who took temporary refuge in Croatia during the war, about 150,000 of whom

have integrated in the country.

Out of the four countries involved in the process, B&H is perhaps the one that has resolved this problem in the best way, where the international political and economic trusteeship has provided returnees with a possibility to return to their homes or relocate to alternative ones. Where Croatia is concerned, there are approximately 8,000 Croatian Serb refugees left in Republika Srpska whose future must definitely be resolved either through their integration in the region or facilitation of their return.



About 95 per cent of the destroyed or damaged houses have been reconstructed, 7,000 apartments will be handed over to applicants by 2009

A major regional problem remains in Serbia (particularly in the province of Vojvodina) where there are close to 300,000 refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, coming from Bosnia, Kosovo, and Croatia, still acknowledged by the State. It is necessary to recognize Belgrade's merit for having integrated a high number of refugees from Croatia (about 130,000). This means that there are still around 70,000 Croatian Serb refugees accommodated in precarious conditions, some of them in collective centres.

The Sarajevo Process identified a series of issues to be resolved by the three countries - particularly

Croatia. They related to the rights returnees had to be guaranteed upon return to their countries of origin: repossession of their houses, reconstruction of damaged property, convalidation of pensions, a solution for unsolicited investments made by temporary occupants, the Law of Foreigners etc.

With no small effort, the OSCE Mission to Croatia has managed to convince the Croatian public and the Government of the indispensable need to accept these commitments. The main resistance came from the lack of understanding of the fact that the attacked country had to compensate the aggressors. Not infrequently I have had to hear journalists' questions such as: "Is there any international precedent according to which the victim must construct houses for its aggressors?"

It is necessary to remember that the immense majority of the 350,000 Croatian Serb refugees were innocent people who did not participate in the conflict, who were the victims of combat just as Croats were and who fled their country in terror - let us not forget that, almost in all cases, their ancestry in Croatia goes back for hundreds of years - to escape the horrors of the armed conflict.

Without a doubt they have the right to the requested compensations and the Croatian Government is delivering them: about 95 per cent of the destroyed or damaged houses have been reconstructed, 7,000 apartments will be handed over to applicants by 2009, all civil rights have been reinstated and the OSCE guarantees their implementation.

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Ambassador Jorge Fuentis,  
Head of Mission

## Calendar

**6-7 July** - Croatia Summit 2007, CiO Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, attended the Summit

**10 July** - Prime Minister's address to the Permanent Council, Vienna

**11 July** - Presentation of the situation in Croatia at the Working Group for Enlargement (COELA), Commission of the EU, Brussels

**13 July** - Plenary meeting with Minister of Development, Božidar Kalmeta

**18-19 July** - Presentation of the Status Report to the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna

**20 July** - Press Conference on Status Report at the Mission's Headquarters

**23 July** - Briefing to the Ambassadors of the OSCE participating states at the OSCE HQ in Zagreb

**27 July** - Plenary meeting at the Ministry of Justice

**31 July** - Closing event of the Children Together Summer Camp, Orahovica, HoM and President Stjepan Mesić attending

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Therefore, the Sarajevo Process has been a great success and it is necessary to close it in the same manner in which it was opened: with a new Ministerial Meeting to confirm the accomplishments and undertake commitments on the future bilateral approach to the implementation of what has been approved, as well as the resolution of the last pending question: the rights to be granted to those refugees who decide not to return to their country of origin. Serbia and Bosnia, which are in a difficult economic situation, need international community support - including assistance on the part of Croatia, which will have to articulate alternative solutions for occupancy/tenancy rights.

Croatia's resources are not limitless, on the other hand. The reconstruction of the country is very costly. One should not forget that in addition to the 13,000 Croats killed in the conflict, the most painful aspect of the tragedy, there were ten times as many houses that were systematically destroyed; that the de-mining of the country exacts an enormous financial toll; that areas affected by the conflict are going through a serious economic depression with unemployment indices of up to 50 per cent and that Croatia - as opposed to its neighbours - is facing the recovery mainly with its own resources.

Ambassador Jorge Fuentes,  
Head of Mission

## Activities

### The SEECP

## Croatia shows the way in South East Europe

Regional co-operation, together with Euro-Atlantic integration is the pillar of Croatia's foreign policy, said Prime Minister Ivo Sanader during his address to the OSCE Permanent Council on 10 July. Indeed, as our Mission reported, Croatia succeeded last year in forging a new Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) for economic progress in the region. Nowadays, Croatia is not only a candidate for a seat on the UN Security Council and strongly committed to Euro-Atlantic integration but, even more importantly, Croatia has been expressly supporting the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of its neighbours in the past few years, some former enemies during the conflict.

One of the best examples of this policy has been this year's Chairmanship of the South East European Co-operation Process (SEECP). The Croatian Chair successfully achieved that South East European countries take ownership of all regional co-operation processes and create the new Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) which will assume the responsibilities of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe as the leading body for regional co-operation.

Before handing over to Bulgaria, the last few months of Croatia's presidency was a time of intense activity. Zagreb successively hosted the 'Regional Energy Conference' at the level of Ministers of Economy, the 'Meeting of Justice and Internal Affairs Ministers', the meeting of 'Parliament Presidents and Speakers', the Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting and the 'Political Directors' Meeting'. OSCE was represented in all meetings by the Head of Mission but also, notably, by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Goran Lennermarker, who had an opportunity to meet with his counterparts in the Member Nations as well as the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the NATO, the Council of Europe, the WEU, and the OSCE Secretary General, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, who came twice to Zagreb for meetings of Foreign Ministers and Heads of State.

The final event was the SEECP Summit (11 May) attended by heads of state, Government and top officials from countries in the region, including the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, the European Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, the European Parliament President, Hans-Gert Pöttering, the EU Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, the US Under-Secretary of State, Nicholas Burns, and senior representatives from NATO and the Council of Europe, as well as the OSCE Secretary General. The Summit concluded with the adoption of a joint declaration reiterating the role of the SEECP in underpinning long-term political stability in the region and establishing Sarajevo as the seat for the Secretariat General of the newly created Regional Co-operation Council.



A momentum during the Zagreb SEECP meeting showing the high level of international support for this regional organization.

Top Croatian Officials and German Chancellor, Angela Merkel

The Summit brought other good news for Croatia: Hidajet Bišćević, the State Secretary for Political Affairs, a senior Croatian diplomat and the main OSCE Mission's contact was elected as the new RCC Secretary General thus confirming the leading role that the international community and SEE nations assign to Croatia as a guiding example of regional integration in the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The staff of the OSCE Mission to Croatia would like to use this opportunity to send Secretary General Bišćević our warmest congratulations!

Enrique Horcajada,  
Head of Executive Office

## Activities

### Plenaries in the Field Passing the message to local authorities

The 'Platform', which is currently being assessed by Vienna as a model that could be employed to other OSCE Missions to assist mandate advancement, has spawned another successful initiative: the so called 'Plenaries in the Field'.

As a result of reports from Field Offices the Mission realized that directions, decisions and policy emanating from the Ministerial meetings were not always cascaded down to the local level. To address this concern, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, proposed the organization of 'Plenaries in the Field'. The initiative was immediately put into practice and resulted in an extremely busy month in June with a very demanding programme requiring constant travelling. It was a hectic program not only for the Croatian Government and the Mission, but also for all international organizations and embassies invited to the sessions.

Benkovac (18 May) chaired by Minister Božidar Kalmeta, Vukovar (04 June) chaired by Minister Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Sisak (13 June) chaired by Minister Ana Lovrin, Gospić (15 June) and Knin (21 June) both chaired by State Secretary Antun Palarić.

Participants at the Plenaries, sometimes more than 150 people, were prefects, mayors, heads of public utility services and other local authority's representatives and heads of regional NGOs and minority groups. The Croatian Government also invited representatives of the international community in Zagreb, most notably the EC, UNHCR and the OSCE representatives acted as witnesses to the messages passed locally. The Ambassador of Spain to Croatia as representative of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office and the Head of Mission attended all 'Plenaries' and were in most cases accompanied by Ambassadors of the US, Germany, Portugal, Russia and Serbia.

detailed presentations of the 'Housing Care Programme for Refugees and Displaced Persons' and the 'minority employment situation' in the region, an address by the Head of Mission, an address by a Serb national minority representative and a Member of Parliament from the region and a final questions and answers session.

In brief, the 'Plenaries in the Field' were a very successful initiative. Apart from messages passed by the Ministry in charge of refugee return and the Ministry of Justice including the Central State Administration Office on minority employment, the presence of high ranking representatives from the Ministry of Justice was used by the Head of Mission to make sure that a message regarding the need for fair war crime trials was also passed. The Mission is thankful to Government officials for passing such a message, especially in an election period, which is extremely difficult and sensitive.



**Above:** All Plenaries included an address by a Serb national minority representative. Serb MP, Ratko Gajica, in discussion with Minister Božidar Kalmeta and HoM, minutes before the opening of the 'Plenary in the Field' in Benkovac



**Right:** Minister of Justice, Ana Lovrin chaired the 'Plenary in the Field' in Sisak

The goal of these Plenaries in the Field was to disseminate the policies agreed upon at the central level to the field in order to send a strong political message to local authorities particularly in the war-affected areas. In order to ensure results, the 'Plenaries' had to be chaired by Ministers, often politicians with strong links to the specific region visited. Five plenaries were organized in the following war-affected areas:

Ambassador Turunen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the OSCE in Vienna, on a fact-finding tour throughout Croatia to prepare the incoming Chairmanship-in-Office, also had the opportunity to attend one of the plenaries in Sisak. Each of the 'Plenaries' followed a similar itinerary: welcome words by the Prefect of the region and the Mayor of the town, an introductory speech by the Chairing Minister,

In this sense, Minister of Justice, Anna Lovrin, during her chair of the Plenary in Sisak, and her colleagues in other sessions, did a good job stressing the need to ensure impartiality and ending impunity for war crimes regardless of the national origin of victims and suspects.

Enrique Horcajada,  
Head of Executive Office

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## Feature story

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### Politicians and ....



The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister Moratinos walks through the streets of Dubrovnik with HoM on their way to the morning session of the Croatia Summit, 7 July 2007



Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader, with top OSCE officials, delivers his speech in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna 10 July 2007



HoM presents the situation of Croatia before the Working Group on Enlargement of the European Union (COELA), Brussels 11 July 2007

### Twelve days in July

The days between 8 and 19 July have been the most intense in the life of the OSCE Mission during its eleven year presence in Croatia. During that week, four events fundamental for the future life of the Mission took place.

The first of them was the Summit of Heads of State, Ministers and leaders of international organizations - OSCE, NATO, Council of Europe - held on 7 and 8 July in Dubrovnik. Although the central topic was The New South, the Dubrovnik Summit indicated the world-wide political recognition of Croatia's progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration which will enable the country to conclude the phase in which monitoring by international organizations, particularly the OSCE is needed. The statements of OSCE Chairman in Office, Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, indicating his wish to propose the closure of the Mission at the Ministerial Council in Madrid, represented a firm step ahead on the path to encouraging mandate completion.

Only two days later, on 10 July, the Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader participated, for the first time in the OSCE's history at a session of the Permanent Council in Vienna. In the Hofburg Palace, filled with ambassadors, the Prime Minister thanked the OSCE for the support given to his country in the past years. As a result, Croatia had managed to modernize itself, create the necessary institutions and to a large extent surpass the immense problems created as a result of the conflict, independence and the introduction of free market economy. Sanader promised to continue resolving pending issues until the Mission could consider its work completed, hopefully by the end of the year. The Prime Minister's main argument in favour of closing the Mission was the proximity of Croatia's accession to NATO and the EU, and, most of all, the conviction that there is no alternative to the development of Croatia according to Euro-Atlantic standards, not only because of the outside requirements, but also according to its own national conviction.

These two events, the Dubrovnik Summit and the Vienna Council, marked the entrance of political level into the life of the OSCE in Croatia which previously had remained at the level of experts.

As experts, we have worked extensively to convince Croatia that each point of the mandate signed between the Organization and the State in 1996 had to be thoroughly fulfilled. Over the course of our stay in Croatia, we have been watching with magnifying glass each law that had to be approved, the functioning of each institution, the degree of reconciliation between national minorities, refugee problems, the course of war crime trials, the situation in education etc.

## Feature story

### ... experts

Sometimes, in my capacity as an expert, I had the impression that we specialists who, with our excessive proximity to the problems, not only have we lost the necessary distance and perspective that allow a better understanding of events, but as experts, we have run the risk of demanding too high standards.

If the politician needs to extract the quintessence of facts from a global perspective, the expert, having studied the facts, has to step back from the subject and recover the view of the forest without trees preventing him to discern its beauty.

As the Head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia, I have tried, without losing sight of my modest capacity as an expert, to put myself at the level of an intermediary in relation to the politicians - politicians such as the CiO, such as the Government of the host country, the politicians who will meet at the Council in Madrid on 29 and 30 of November, the political positions that are also represented in Vienna, within the complex structure of the Organization.

The two remaining July events led me to the honourable and indispensable terrain of experts. On 11 July, I presented the situation of Croatia before the Working Group on Enlargement of the European Union (COELA), at the moment when negotiations on the *acquis* are advancing at a fast pace. This is also a moment when the Commission and some member states want to be able to continue counting on OSCE support which has been instrumental in helping Croatia conform within certain fields of the *acquis*, especially Chapters 23 and 24.

The long week of July was closed with the presentation of the Status Report in Vienna before the Permanent Council, an unrecognizably thin document (14 pages, in contrast to its 100 page equivalent presented only two years ago), a prelude to a debate that is expected to be as hot as the Croatian summer.

It is too early to tell yet what is going to happen in Madrid in November. Perhaps the decision on Croatia will not be known until a few days before the Council or even during the course of the Ministerial Meeting itself. Some indicators seem to suggest that almost everything can be resolved in the forthcoming months - the handover of 1,400 apartments to returnees, the commitment to deliver the remaining 5,600 within a reasonable period of 2 years, respect of refugees' civil rights, the resolution of rule of law issues - with the exception of the monitoring of war crime trials, for which a solution is appearing on the horizon. But for the time being, let us wait until Madrid.

Ambassador Jorge Fuentes,  
Head of Mission



HoM presenting the Status Report before the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, 19 July 2007



HoM and Mission's Spokesperson, Ljerka Draženović, holding a media conference on the occasion of the presentation of the Status Report, Zagreb 20 July 2007



HoM and the Heads of Units presenting the Status Report for the ambassadors of the OSCE participating states, Zagreb 23 July

# President with children in Orahovica

Within this year's 'Children Together' project 50 children from sixth and seventh class from 25 of the 30 ethnically mixed primary schools in Osijek-Baranja and Vukovar Counties enjoyed their 15 day stay at Orahovica, the beautiful site of the Red Cross Osijek, from 17 - 31 July 2007. This part of the project was made possible by seven different donors, including the Embassies of Australia, Japan, Norway, both Counties, the Executive Council of Vojvodina and *Školska knjiga*.

The group, selected among 250 applicants at auditions in June based on their natural talents, included an equal number of boys and girls. The youngsters, from 13 - 15 years, came from seven different minorities and the majority population. During their stay they not only enjoyed the environment, especially the daily swimming, but attended work shops provided by the Red Cross on issues such as conflict resolution, tolerance and stereotypes.



The President with the children of different nationalities that were selected for the summer camp in Orahovica, 31 July 2007

Their main achievement was the development of a performance based on the "Little Prince" by A. de Saint Exupery. Together with Slavica Benick-Grozaj and the author they developed their own ideas, based on the scenario by Zvonko Penović, learned the songs written and composed by Dean Čaćija, dances choreographed by Katarina Arbanas and worked with Melitta Klekar on the decoration, while one group played the percussion instruments.



HoM with the Ambassadors of Portugal, US and Japan, and the Head of UNHCR in Croatia, important donors and facilitators of the project, 31 July 2007

Nearly 100 VIPs, including Stjepan Mesić, the President of Croatia, Minister Ljubičić, many representatives of regional and local governments, an impressive number of ambassadors and donor representatives as well as most parents were able to see the children's dedication for themselves on 31 July, during the final event. It was breathtaking what children, who had never before discovered and used their respective talents, were able to present on stage and how they conveyed a strong message of friendship and love.

In his speech President Mesić said 'it was a great idea to have children in one place spending time together and socializing with each other, regardless of their social, religious or ethnic beliefs, developing friendship and tolerance. This was also the children's message for the adults that they must accept life together and enjoy it, too.'



The representation of the "Little Prince" not only included drama but also dancing and singing by the children participating in the summer camp, July 31 2007

Minister of Health Ljubičić commented that "national minorities in Croatia represent our wealth; they represent our bridge towards the neighboring countries, towards our friends. National minorities represent something that we wish to encourage today, in particular tolerance, because children are the ones who taught us today about this important segment of life."

During their time in the camp many of these children, who easily conversed in their respective languages, developed a stronger sense of self-consciousness and self-assurance, opened up and became a big family. Thus, it is good to know that they will meet again, not only for the final events in Osijek and Vukovar, but also next year in Orahovica, invited by the Red Cross. The Red Cross already plans to follow up these activities, and include such a summer camp in their yearly plan.

Renate Herrmanns,  
Head of Field Office Vukovar

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## Activities

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# OSCE in humanitarian endeavour again

In the past 10 years of the OSCE presence in Croatia, Mission members have, in their every day work, witnessed a thousand sad destinies and vulnerable cases. Many lives have changed for ever. The OSCE employees have always been doing their best to alleviate pain and suffering many of our clients went through.

Recently it was the OSCE privilege to be able to assist Ms. Cecilija Krstić and her family, which were forced out of their tenancy rights apartment located in Novi Zagreb 14 years ago.

On the 4 July the Mission organized the transportation of a very valuable donation given by the British Embassy. The goods were given to Ms. Krstić who was thrilled to see her flat full of furniture and useful things again.

Ms. Krstić personally visited HoM Ambassador Fuentes and other Mission Members who participated in the donation, expressing her sincere sign of appreciation for everything the Mission did for her.



Cecilija Krstić and OSCE's Maja Andrić during the hand over of the furniture to Ms Krstic's apartment in July

Ever since, Ms. Krstić fought for her right to this apartment using all legal means. She won the legal battle and received the same flat back, however heavily devastated. All her belongings, including furniture, were reported missing. Meanwhile, the apartment was repaired by the Ministry of Defence but unfortunately they did not recover any of her belongings.

In addition, the Mission recommended the Center for Peace Studies (CPS) from Zagreb and Committee for Human Rights from Karlovac to receive the generous donation of various office furniture from the British Embassy. The Embassy also donated very valuable residential furniture to several returnee families in Glina.

Maja Andrić, R&I Assistant

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## Photo story

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The two teams that collaborated towards the completion of the Mission's mandate. HoM, former HoM Peter Semneby, Head of Executive Office, Enrique Horcajada, former Head of Executive Office, Mark Fawcett and former Mission's Spokesperson, Antonella Cerasino at lunch on the occasion of HoM's presentation of the the situation in Croatia before the Working Group on Enlargement of the European Union (COELA), Brussels 11 July 2007

## Photo Gallery



A session of the Croatia Summit in Dubrovnik where the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister Moratinos and HoM participated in the discussions, 7 July 2007



Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader, with top OSCE officials, delivers his speech in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna 10 July 2007



HoM prior to the presentation of the situation in Croatia before the Working Group on Enlargement of the European Union (COELA) talks to the current COELA Head from Portugal, Brussels 11 July 2007



The large audience of ambassadors of the OSCE participating states on the occasion of HoM's presentation of the Status Report in Vienna, 19 July 2007



Media conference on the occasion of the presentation of the Status Report was attended by journalists from important Croatian TV stations, radio and print media, Zagreb 20 July 2007



The ambassadors of the OSCE participating states during the presentation of the Status Report in OSCE HQ, 23 July 2007