

**Election Observation Mission
National Assembly Elections
in Republika Srpska
22-23 November 1997**

PRESS RELEASE

Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Mr. Javier Rupérez Assesses Elections in Republika Srpska

Sarajevo, 24 November 1997 -- Mr. Javier Rupérez, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, was appointed by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office as Special Representative for the assessment of the elections in Republika Srpska. He issued the following statement today based on his observations and those of the 150 international observers:

The Observation Mission has concluded that the RS National Assembly election was well administered and a technically correct process. However, it has also concluded that a technically correct process has been grafted onto a political environment which falls far short of democratic standards. While recognising that this election is part of an ongoing conflict resolution process, this process can only be effective if the political parties take serious steps in the implementation of all aspects of the Dayton Agreement.

This election does represent a further step forward. The electorate met their civic responsibility by participating in the election process and expressing their political preferences in a peaceful manner. However, the elected institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still not meeting their responsibility to the electorate and are not functioning in an effective manner. The bodies at national level are failing to pass laws and make decisions that are absolutely crucial to the development of an independent state.

It should also be stressed that the success of the elections is dependent upon the full loyalty of all parties to the results, and that the National Assembly will meet and conduct its duties effectively. Regardless of how the distribution of seats will be, the obligation of all parties to actively contribute to the peace agreement implementation process should be underlined.

The Presidential, Parliamentary, Cantonal and Municipal elections that have taken place in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the last two years could not have been realised without the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The thorough involvement of the OSCE will also be crucial for the upcoming 1998 elections. Nevertheless, during the 1998 election process, the local election authorities should become more engaged in order to prepare for a smooth transfer of a Provisional Election Commission to a Permanent one.

A more detailed preliminary report on the elections is available by request.