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Peace Implementation Council

The Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council will meet at Ministerial level in Sintra, Portugal on 30 May. The meeting has been called for by the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, in order to *"re-energize international attention to and efforts to assist the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)"* In addition to setting out the international community's strategy for the months ahead, the meeting will also be important in appointing a new High Representative to implement the strategy. As Chairman of the PIC Steering Board, Mr. Bildt has overall responsibility for pushing forward the process of the appointment of his successor. In this connection he has been in close contact with members of the Steering Board as well as briefing the Bosnian Presidency.

Mr. Bildt announced in a statement that he had urged the Co-Chairs and Vice-Chair of the Council of Ministers to finish work on their part of the economic aspects of the Quick Start Package (QSP) before the Sintra meeting. *"To do so would send a good signal – to fail to do so would undoubtedly affect international confidence in the capacity of the common institutions to move ahead with peace implementation"*, said Mr. Bildt. He hoped that the efforts in the days leading up to the conference would make it possible for the Sintra meeting to call a Donors Conference in late June, and warned that a failure to move forward on the QSP risked rapidly affecting the level of international assistance available during the next few years.

A Sintra Declaration expressing the determination of the international community to press forward with implementation of the Peace Agreement will be adopted at the meeting. The Declaration will also call on the BiH authorities to fully live up to their responsibilities.

The meeting will be attended by Foreign Ministers of the eleven members of the PIC Steering Board, including the nations represented in the Contact Group. US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright and British Secretary of State, Robin Cook will also be attending their first Steering Board in their new capacities. The Presidency of BiH, as well as of the Federation and the RS have also been invited to the meeting. The United Nations, NATO, OSCE and the UNHCR are also invited to attend in an observer capacity.

Bildt Speech – The Netherlands

In his address – *"Europe and Bosnia: Lessons of the Past and Paths for the Future"*, delivered to the Netherlands Association of International Affairs in the Hague on 27 May, the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, offered his view on the lessons that failed efforts to prevent the wars of Yugoslav secession had taught, and the steps which needed to be taken to prevent repetition of similar mistakes in the future.

The break-up of Yugoslavia had caught the world unprepared. *"Very suddenly we were caught with one major challenge after the other, without adequate preparations, without instruments necessary and without agreement on the essential political framework for dealing with them"*. This, said Bildt, applied in particular to the European Union, but in general to nearly everyone. The build-up of political pressure from different countries in the EU at the time had resulted in an impatience to await results of slow-moving negotiations. This was coupled with an unwillingness to support political action with limited military action where it could have had an impact. Mr. Bildt said that the lessons from these mistakes were clear: *"first, a political strategy must be able to count on the backing also of military resources at critical times"*; and *"second, [that] a European policy not fully supported by all its member states would be as ineffective as a fully supported European Union policy directly or indirectly undermined by non-European actors"*.

Focusing on the events leading up to full US military involvement in Bosnia, Mr. Bildt opined that there was a risk of repeating similar patterns where *"European inability to deal with concrete situations, in combination with initial US unwillingness to do so [would] produce a situation which sooner or later [would] make a larger US role imperative"*. This was neither in the interests of the European Union nor in the interest of the United States, he said. *"US strengthŠlies less in their ability to devise strategies and set out policies, than in their superior ability to orchestrate action and support for whatever policy happens to be theirs at any given moment"*, It was therefore *"an absolute necessity to forge a true Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in order for Europe to be able to take its responsibility, as well as to develop that partnership with primarily the US, but increasingly with Russia, which [would] make it possible to address all the challenges on the horizon"*.

The machinery to do this would be the European Union Council of Ministers, which would form the *"nucleus of efforts"* to set up a true CFSP. Two changes would also be necessary. Militarily there would need to be closer integration of the Western European Union (WEU) to set up structures to prepare and implement policy, and to ensure an ability to talk to and within NATO with competence and clarity on such issues. Short term military exit strategies were not possible without resultant substantial political collapse. *"What we must do is shape a coherent security structure for the region as a whole, which includes the stationing of outside forces at key positions in order to be able to deter any attempt – by anyone in the region – to resort to aggression, war or large-scale violence"*.

Politically, the European Union would need to be ready to act and to assume responsibility, possibly through active political presence of Special or High Representatives who would be the face and voice of Europe in specific areas and on specific issues.

The so-called regional approach had initiated the economic strategy – though the European Union would have to be *"more daring and visionary in its approach to the area – opening up the prospects for substantial investments in trans-European networks, the establishment of a customs union or the extension of the single market into the region"*. The economic component would grow in significance as normality returned to the region – *"the belt of poverty and despair across the Balkan peninsula stretching form Bosnia, Montenegro and Albania through Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) into Bulgaria and Rumania Š could breed and fuel further social and political instability."*

Pointing to the most recent example of the failure of concerted European action – Albania, Mr. Bildt stressed that South Eastern Europe would remain the main challenge for the CFSP in years to come. Referring to Kosovo, Mr. Bildt said that all European countries shared a deep concern over the situation there. Progress had been made towards some sort of substantial autonomy for Kosovo as a precondition for a substantial improvement in their relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The excuses for past failures, that there had been no time to devise the instruments for post Cold-War situations, were no longer valid when it came to the problems in this region. The key task of his successor, who would be named on 30 May in Sintra, would be not only in keeping the international coalition for peace in Bosnia together, but also in re-forging it in view of the long term uncertainties. In order to do this effectively, there had to be *"a stronger European voice, and a stronger European arm"*.

Presidency

The eighteenth Session of the BiH Presidency was held in the Electrical Engineering Faculty in Lukavica on 26 May. Haris Silajdzic, Co-Chair of the CoM represented Presidency Chairman Alija Izetbegovic at the meeting which was also attended by Presidency members, Kresimir Zubak and Momcilo Krajisnik. The main focus of discussion for the six hour session was the Law on the Central Bank and proposal for the Budget of BiH. The Governing Board of the Central Bank also attended discussions on these issues. Talks also covered the forthcoming Ministerial level of the Steering Board PIC meeting. Accreditations of the Ambassadors of Greece and Hungary to BiH were also approved.

Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers met on 22 May in Sarajevo. Prior to the meeting, HR, Carl Bildt sent a letter to the Co-Chairs Boro Bosic and Haris Siladzic, and Vice-Chair Neven Tomic, urging them in the interests of BiH to make every effort to conclude a minimum of four issues before the PIC meeting in Sintra. These included:

1. signing by the Chairs, and transferral to the Presidency for approval of the clean draft of the Budget and Execution law as agreed by the Council on 8 May. To be followed by submission to the Parliament.
2. adoption by the Council and signing by the Chairs of the proposal by the Working Group on Customs Tariffs. Followed by submission to the BiH Parliament, along with the Law on Customs.
3. submission to the BiH Parliament of the Law on Customs Policy which was adopted by the CoM on 27 March and signed by Mr. Bosic and Mr. Tomic in April. Concurrently with this the BiH Presidency should finalise the Law on the Central Bank and submit it to the Parliament for adoption on an urgent basis.
4. instruction by the CoM to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications, to negotiate an agreement with the Republic of Croatia on the opening of the northern border crossings with Croatia.

Mr. Bildt concluded the letter adding that *"If the necessary steps are taken, this should pave the way for the Steering Board to support an early convening of the Donor's Conference"*.

At their 22 May session the CoM carried out the first of these recommendations, i.e. transmitted the Budget and Execution Law to the Presidency.

RS National Assembly

The eighth session of the Republika National Assembly was held on 26-27 May in Jahorina. The delegates accepted the Report on the Implementation of Special Parallel Relations Between the RS and FRY and adopted arrangements with regard to reconstruction in the RS in cooperation with various international organisations. Delegates also adopted the Law on Privatisation, the Law on the Loan for Reconstruction of the RS, and four agriculture Laws. In defiance of the recently introduced IPTF checkpoint policy, RS Minister of the Interior, Dragan Kijac, announced that the RS police would continue to carry out their duties in accordance with the RS law since no-one had the right to interfere with the legitimate rules and regulations of the RS law.

Freedom of Movement

As of 1200 hours on 26 May UN IPTF and SFOR began conducting joint patrols with a view to implementing the IPTF Checkpoint policies. The patrols will concentrate on removal of illegal checkpoints along the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). If SFOR encounters checkpoints in the course of their duties outside joint patrolling, they will report to IPTF who will check whether the checkpoint is authorised. UN officials announced that despite the recent "verbal posturing" on the part of the RS, the number of illegal checkpoints encountered by IPTF had been minimal.

Despite general compliance by both Entities with the policy, reluctance to commit to the new procedures has been expressed by the RS authorities. Following a series of recent meetings between senior international officials and RS President Plavsic on the subject of implementing the checkpoint policies, HR Carl Bildt, emphasised that despite this reluctance the international community remained *"fully committed to implementing and enforcing FOM"*. The checkpoint policy has been carefully prepared in compliance both with the provisions of the Peace Agreement and the Constitution of BiH, while allowing the police forces to carry out their normal policing functions in accordance with democratic principles. *"We will not accept behavior of the police from either Entity that is contrary to the agreed policy and stand of the International Community. We have said very clearly that we prefer co-operation to confrontation"*, said Mr. Bildt.

Coalition for Return

The Coalition for Return opened its first information office on 27 May. Principal Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Michael Steiner, officially opened the office which is located at the "Vladimir Nazor" primary school in Sarajevo. In his opening address Ambassador Steiner expressed his belief that the office would be a central point for organising the Coalition, which he said had grown from meetings in Mostar, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Modrica, Bosanski Petrovac and Tuzla into a grass-roots movement throughout the whole of Bosnia – "a focal point where the energy which had been growing would be channelled into result". The Coalition for Return, with a current membership of 136 local and 46 international refugee organisations, provides a voice for hundreds of people whose only wish is to return home and provides a forum for exchange of information and mutual assistance. The Coalition's intentions to expand its movement include: plans for further information offices in Tuzla, Banja Luka and Mostar; representation and participation of the Coalition at International Refugee Conferences; construction of a Coalition information website on the internet; the establishment of a self help home repair programme; promotion of return as a major election issue; and establishment of a legal aid service for refugees and DPs. The opening of this first information office means a further step towards realising these plans, broadening the network and furthering the principles of coexistence of the country's peoples and citizens – and their right to return home, said Ambassador Steiner.

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OSCE

At their meeting on 26 May in Sarajevo the OSCE Election Appeals Sub-Commission issued two major rulings on recent violations of Provisional Election Commission (PEC) Rules and Regulations.

The first ruling concerned the matter of allegations of registration irregularities in Banja Luka, Prijedor, Gradiska, Kotor Varos, Srpski Drvar and Srpski Kljuc/Ribnik. The ruling comprised ten separate decisions which included: the striking off of names on the party list of the ruling Serb Democratic Party (SDS) party (who, as ruling party were obliged to punish those who violated the PEC Rules and Regulations); the irreplaceable termination of candidacies for public office of those names stricken off the list; the removal from office of the Chairmen of registration centres; the decertification of SDS from municipal elections in Srpski Drvar; and the barring from candidacy of individuals who presented false residency receipts.

The second ruling concerned the matter of complaints against the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) in the Drvar Municipality for acts of violence and intimidation against political minorities. The ruling found that the HDZ-Drvar had violated PEC Rules and Regulations and, though the situation in Drvar had recently been quiet, the arsons and related acts had resulted in an obvious “chilling effect” on the rights of political minorities to exercise their individual right to participate in the electoral process. The EASC ruled that: the first name on the HDZ party list would be stricken and the candidacy for public office permanently terminated; in the event that politically motivated violence or intimidation continued to occur the EASC would take appropriate action, for instance, employing the penalty of striking two or more candidates for the destruction of one house; the Drvar Chief of Police and Municipal Authorities would be censured; and the EASC would continue to monitor the situation, revisiting it if the police did not act professionally on irregularity incidents brought to their attention. This would include failure to co-operate fully with the IPTF, SFOR and OSCE.

Human Rights

UN IPTF monitors who reported that minorities in Teslic were facing increasing pressure are following up on a number of cases involving damage to property, threats, inappropriate detention, intimidation and assault. Monitors believe that some of the threats and intimidation are an attempt to persuade families to leave their property. Both the UN Special Rapporteur, Elisabeth Rehn, and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BiH have expressed concern about the situation of minorities in the municipality and said that deteriorating conditions could result in the departure of Bosniaks and Croats from the area. Approximately 1,600 Bosniaks and a lesser number of Croats live in some eight villages in the area. Human rights observers are closely monitoring the situation.

ICTY

On 20 May the UN General Assembly elected eleven judges to serve as members of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia over the next four years. report. The new Hague Tribunal judges’ mandate will begin on 17 November 1997. Of the newly appointed judges, five are already members of the Tribunal, among whom is current Tribunal president Antonio Cassese from Italy.

Economic Assistance

A seven member delegation from the World Bank’s (WB) Board of Directors boarded on 18 May the first train to cross the IEBL in five years. A political and technical agreement reached the previous day, in addition to financial assistance from the international community committed in ’96 for repair of the railways, enabled the 60 km Tuzla-Doboj rail track to reestablish links between these two industrial centres, allowing the transport of raw materials and finished products to and from the two cities. North-South and East-West train traffic is an essential prerequisite for development of trade within BiH, and with other European countries. IFOR/SFOR assisted in this railway repair and rehabilitation effort for which US$ 16 million was committed last year by the international community. Further

upgrading is planned for 1997. “It is a pity to see economic recovery stymied by the lack of transport and something had to be done about it” said Mr. Rory O’Sullivan, WB Director in BiH who helped broker the agreement.

After leaving Doboj the WB delegation visited several reconstruction projects in Sarajevo and met with members of the BiH Council of Ministers.

The World Food Programme (WFP) announced that the Italian Government has provided US$ 1.2 million through WFP to repair the war-damaged infrastructure of the Bihac wheat processing company, Zitoprerada. The project aims to boost the milling capacity and increase the work force to pre-war levels.

Media Issues

“eFM” – (Education FM) a new radio station built for, and developed with, the students of BiH by the United Nations Mission in BiH (UNMIBH) was officially opened on 15 May by SRSG Ambassador Kai Eide.

The radio station was set up with material and financial assistance from the OSCE and the European Union, the Implementation Force, the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Canadian Embassy. Located on the new campus of the University of Sarajevo (formerly Tito Barracks) the station acquired a broadcast frequency to begin non-stop broadcasting from 1 April 1997. The radio project aims to train students in journalism and all aspects of running a radio station; to set up structures enabling students to take over control when UNMIBH Radio withdraws; to organise a scholarship awards scheme that will allow students to work at “eFM” as part of their curriculum; and to give the youth of Sarajevo an avenue to explore their views and make an impact on the future of BiH.

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Looking Ahead

30 May
Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council meets in Sintra, Portugal
2 June
EU General Affairs Council, Luxembourg
2-4 June
Plenary meeting on Succession Issues for the Formwer Yugoslavia, Brussels
4 June
UN Special Rapporteur on Human Right, Mrs. Elisabeth Rehn begins visit to FRY, Croatia and BiH

See our Chronology for a full list of activities

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