

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

Parliamentarians Propose To Increase Their Own Benefits

BiH Parliamentarians are preparing once again to attempt to increase the benefits and privileges that they are entitled to through the Law on Rights and Duties of the Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (*Zakon o pravima i duznostima clanova Parlamentarne skupstine BiH*). This legislation is to be considered by the Constitutional and Legal Committee of the BiH House of Representatives today. The text is exactly the same as that presented to Parliament in the latter part of 2003, which was subsequently rejected as a result of outrage in the media and among the public.

This legislation, if it were enacted, would have significant budgetary implications that the State budget may not be able to cover. It would set a precedent for other government institutions. It is utterly indefensible in view of the fact that pensioners, recipients of welfare, teachers, and other budget beneficiaries receive barely enough to make ends meet. Here's just one example: this law would enable Parliamentarians to have pensions as high as 2,500 KM, while

the average pension in the BiH is 197KM.

This proposal is particularly scandalous coming as it does at a time when the authorities have committed themselves to addressing the unsustainable cost of governance in BiH. The sprawling administrative structure means that citizens are paying too much money for too little service. Even the status quo is fiscally unsustainable and to act now to increase this burden would be indefensible. Parliamentarians should be discussing what they can do to make the lives of citizens better, not what they can do to make their own, already privileged, circumstances better.

It is also important to note that the BiH House of Representatives at its 43rd session on 8 September 2004 introduced a moratorium on all laws and decisions introducing new privileges to elected officials. Put simply, if the Law on Rights and Duties of Delegates is adopted today the HoR's Constitutional and Legal Commission will be in direct violation of its own decision.

Ambassador Wnendt Visiting Mostar

The Senior Deputy High Representative, Werner Wnendt, is in Mostar today where he is meeting Mostar city officials. Ambassador Wnendt will discuss the current process of unification of Mostar, focusing on unification of institutions, when he meets Mayor Ljubo Beslic and President of the City Council Murat Coric.

The SDHR will also visit the premises of the Federation Civil Service Branch Office in Mostar, where he will meet the Head of the Branch Office, Mirjana Kutanjac, and discuss the implementation of the civil service law in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and the West Herzegovina Canton.

It is essential to make the Federation Civil Service Agency and its branch offices fully operational because this agency will lead a systematic overhaul of, and improvement in, the

services that are offered to Federation residents across the whole range of activities through which civil servants serve members of the public.

As part of BiH's public administration reform, the OHR is assisting the domestic authorities in building up a modern, professional and merit-based civil service throughout the country, which will provide citizens with the services they need and will eventually lead BiH into European structures.

OSCE

Ambassador Davidson stresses importance of administrative and legal unification of two schools under one roof

Ambassador Douglas Davidson, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina , visited Lipanjske zore school in Capljina this past Friday. This meeting was a follow-up to a visit made in May 2004, by the OSCE's Director of Education at the invitation of local authorities. During the visit Ambassador Davidson toured the school and visited a classroom. In subsequent discussion with the Director of the School and the Coordinator for the Federation BiH Curriculum he reiterated the importance of completing the process of administrative and legal unification of this school, as had been discussed and indicated nearly a year ago. At the same time, he also stressed his Mission 's awareness of the importance of ensuring equal respect for differing curricula.

Ambassador Davidson reports to OSCE Permanent Council on developments in BiH

Head of OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina , Ambassador Douglas Davidson will appear before the 55 member OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on Thursday, 17 February.

Ambassador Davidson will inform the members of the Permanent Council about the results and the pace of the on-going activities, in each of the Mission 's programme areas,

including: Democratisation, Human Rights, Education, Public Administration Reform and Security Co-operation.

EUFOR

AFBiH Mine Action Plan Signing Ceremony – Media Event

Members of the media are advised that the signing of the 2005 AFBiH De-mining Action Plan will take place at EUFOR Headquarters, Camp Butmir , on Friday 18 February 2005. The ceremony will include a photo opportunity and short statements by the Deputy Commander of EUFOR and Generals from the AFBiH Joint Staff, the VF and the VRS at 1400.

Meeting of the Joint Military Commission – Press Conference

Members of the media are advised that the 44th Meeting of the Joint Military Commission (JMC) will take place at EUFOR Headquarters, Camp Butmir , on Monday 28 February 2005. A Press Conference will be held at 1250 during the JMC Meeting, at which the Commander of EUFOR, Major General David Leakey, and the BiH Minister of Defence, Mr Nikola Radovanovic, will speak.

NATO HQ

On Monday at approximately 1400 hrs, Vladimir Illic was released from NATO custody and handed over to the RS MUP authorities in Bijeljina. Illic is being incarcerated in an RS detention facility to serve a sentence for the murder of a policeman in Bratunac. NATO detained Illic with the full cooperation of the Republic of Srpska . NATO HQ Sarajevo would like to thank to the RS authorities for their support of our investigation.

Anyone with information on a person indicted for war crimes may telephone anonymously on 061 222 305.

ICTY

Please contact ICTY for details.

RTQ'S:

OHR:

Are there any questions? Nick?

Nick Hawton, BBC:

A couple of questions for OHR: In the light of the major allegations made in today's Guardian newspaper relating to a company involved in the Tara Canyon Project the UK's serious fraud office is now investigating, will OHR now stop the project? Secondly, can OHR comment on the fact the allegations that these accusations have caused frictions between Lord Ashdown's office and British diplomats? And just thirdly, where is the RS Auditor's report into "Elektroprivreda" that Lord Ashdown ordered about eighteen months ago.

OHR:

Very briefly, I cannot comment on that speculation on alleged or non-alleged relations between anybody, including Ashdown and diplomats. But, I will say just one thing, that this case is under judicial review right now, through the special auditor's office, I believe that's known and because of such situation, as you know we never comment things that are in judicial process and I could not comment anything further at this point.

Nick Hawton, BBC:

And where is the RS Auditor's report that OHR ordered? Where is that?

OHR:

Where is RS Auditor's report?

Nick Hawton, BBC:

Yes.

OHR:

Well, you could ask the government. I mean, I really couldn't tell at this moment. But it's under judicial review, this particular thing that you asked.

Nick Hawton, BBC:

But this is a report ordered by Lord Ashdown?

OHR:

It's a report by the RS Supreme Audit Office, I believe that's the name.

Nick Hawton, BBC:

But it was ordered by Lord Ashdown?

OHR:

Well that's a report by the RS authorities. So...

Nick Hawton, BBC:

Does Lord Ashdown have a copy?

OHR:

Well yes, we received a copy.

Nick Hawton, BBC:

Can we get a copy?

OHR:

Well, since it's a report from the, you know, RS official institution, I mean it's up to them to distribute it, but, I

don't think it should be a problem.

Almir Sarenkapa, TV Pink:

Has the OHR received the report of the commission of the Ministry of Defense of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the systematic omissions in the functioning of the defense system in Republica Srpska? And if so, when may a response be expected, as the report should be forwarded to the Parliament?

OHR:

Yes, the deadline was the 14th, we have received the report, however when will it be possible for the report to be forwarded...it is currently under consideration, in any event we will make an effort for this to take place as soon as possible and to respond to the issue in question. For now, I really cannot give you a more precise date.