Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	• Vetting process complete • Deputy HR Bercot supports city communal company in Mostar
OSCE	Richard Medic	• Instructions on 'Two Schools under One Roof' must be issued
SFOR	Capt. Magistretti	• MNBSE discovers weapon in Rogatica area • Kokorina Cattle Market issue

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Avis Benes – OHR:

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome to today's press conference of the International Organizations seated in Mostar.

On behalf of the OHR, I have two points for you today.

The first one, which you all probably expect, refers to the vetting process. The International Community has now completed the vetting process for the three Canton 7 Government Ministers – Education, Justice and Interior. None of the three have passed the process. All three are manifestly unfit to take up these sensitive offices. Vetting process is part of the process of raising standards in government in this country. As you know, the vetting process looks at the following criteria: (1) war crimes record; (2) serious criminal record; (3) record of obstruction. What follows now is that the parties will now need to submit three new candidates for vetting – this time, the OHR hopes, people who do not have incriminating pasts and are prepared to implement the reforms that the people of Canton 7 so desperately need.

Second point refers to the city level problem. Deputy High Representative Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot fully supports finding of the long-term solution to the constantly problematic issue of waste disposal in Mostar. As it is known, this City is presently having a big opportunity to obtain 2 million $ from the World Bank the establishment of the regional solid waste disposal site and subsequently additional 5 million $ from the Global Environment Fund for cleaning of Neretva River. The deadline for this grant is expiring soon and the main precondition for its realization is establishment of the City communal company. Crucial factor in this process are City municipalities which should at their municipal sessions transfer competencies over the communal activities to the City. Establishment of a City communal company which will lead to the valuable World Bank help will be absolutely beneficial for all citizens of Mostar and is another step in the normalization of the City. Ambassador Bercot appeals to all relevant municipal and city representatives to responsibly, without any politicization, deal with this matter and to achieve the long-awaited solution.

This is all on behalf of the OHR. Now, I give the floor to Richard and OSCE.

Richard Medic – OSCE

I have one statement for today but before I start I have one technical point. The OSCE website has been updated. I know that many people – including journalists – find it an invaluable source of information, so I urge you to use it. It includes press releases, feature stories, useful documents, and an 'online forum'. The address is **www.oscebih.org**

The Federal Ministry of Education met in Siroki Brijeg yesterday with education ministry representatives from Cantons 6, 7, 8 and 10 to discuss the urgent steps required to bring about full administrative and legal unification of the 52 'two schools under one roof' still operating in the Federation of BiH. OSCE representatives also attended the meeting. In 'two schools under one roof', Bosniac and Croat children, as well as their teachers, often have no mutual contact. Administrative unification of 'two-schools under one roof' aims to eliminate the physical, social and psychological separation of students outside the classroom. Through administrative unification these schools should be registered as single legal bodies, with one Director, a multi-ethnic steering board, joint administrative

personnel, and a joint budget. Administrative unification is not related to the curriculum or work within the classroom. However, it would entail holding classes during the same shifts and intermingling of classrooms to minimise the physical divide between students of different ethnicities. At yesterday's meeting in Siroki Brijeg, the cantonal ministers failed to reach agreement on issuing instructions on administrative and legal unification prior to the end of June. These instructions would set out the initial steps for implementation by September. OSCE is disappointed by the cantonal ministers' ongoing resistance to the administrative and legal unification of 'two schools under one roof', and now calls on the relevant ministers to carefully consider the principles and objectives set forth in the Education Reform Strategy. As signatories to this Strategy Paper, the education ministries have promised to 'put an end to segregation and discrimination through education', and to 'cut wastage, duplication and inefficiencies in BiH's education system.' OSCE is now looking forward to seeing the education ministers, when they re-convene next week, come to an agreement on the future steps that need to be taken in order to resolve this issue.

And if I can just add that OSCE eagerly awaits a Canton 7 Minister of Education, whoever that may be, whom we will urge to issue instructions for the unification of the "two schools under one roof" as soon as possible.

Avis Benes – OHR

Thank you Richard. Now, let's hear SFOR and Capt. Magistretti.

Capt. Magistretti – SFOR:

Ladies and Gentlemen good morning.

Yesterday MNBSE troops belonging to the German Italian Battle Group conducted a search operation in the village of Zabrezje, in the area of Rogatica. Members of MNBSE in co-operation with local police searched some houses and privately owned premises and discovered illegally detained weapon:

- 7 small calibre arms and pistols
- 11 bayonets
- 3 hand grenades
- 1 mine
- 174 pieces of ammunition of different calibre
- 0.5 kg gun powder
- 400 empty caps
- empty cartridge clips

and other warlike materials.

Confiscation of such a large amount of illegally detained weapons shows once again that a lot of warlike material is still in circulation. MNB SE is determined to achieve its goal that is to insure safe and secure environment. For this reason, as long illegal weapons are circulating, we will continue to conduct this kind of operations.

As far as Monday press release is concerned, I have to apologize because the real meaning was lost in translation. So, instead of 2482 Cartridge clips we meant only 2842 Cartridges of different calibre.

I have a further point today. Yesterday, in Blagaj, the Mayor of Mostar South-East, Mr. Zijo Isic, the Mayor of Nevesinje, Mr. Bosko Buha, as well as the Minister of Agriculture for Canton 7 Mr. Rasim Hamzic gathered in a meeting organized by MNB SE representatives. They discussed the problem of Kokorina Cattle Market and the importance of this economic tool for the further development of the whole area. They will discuss the re-opening of the market next Monday.

Thank you.

Avis Benes – OHR:

Thank you SFOR. Now your questions please.

Questions:

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): Given that none of the three Ministers have passed the vetting process I would like to ask if the Government can still function as if it is in a full composition. Namely, at today's session, one of the points of the agenda was supposed to be adoption of a general collective agreeement which the Minister of Education should have approved. Will decisions that will eventually be made today be legal? Secondly, is there any deadline for the vetting process to be completed? I am aware that parties are to submit new candidates, the OHR is to carry out a vetting process, but how long should it take?

A: Avis Benes: As for proposals, they should be submitted as soon as possible and this was also emphasised to the Prime Minister Coric yesterday. So obviously, the parties should submit the names of their candidates very, very quickly. As it is already known, OHR has a sort of deadline for vetting process which takes up maximum 10 days. As for the work of the Government itself, as we emphasised numerous times before, the work should not be blocked with the vetting process. Surely there are questions which concretely refer to the relevant Ministries and which cannot be discussed. However, there are plenty of questions which can and should be discussed. This Canton has already lost so much time and no additional excuses are acceptable any longer.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): One more – Before the Cantonal Parliament Mr. Coric said that, if they do not pass the vetting process, the Ministers from the former Governmnet composition will work instead of them. This makes no sense as these three are the previous Ministers. All I want to know is whether will they be removed from the Government?

A: Avis Benes: They are not in the Government any longer.

Q: Stanislava Maric (Croat Radio Mostar): You said that Bilic, Isakovic and Raguz were checked in terms of war crimes records, serious criminal record and record of obstruction. I would like to know what the sins of these three men are. Is this decision final? Are they allowed to appeal against it?

A: Avis Benes: It can be definitely confirmed that this was a definite decision of the OHR. It is the final decision. As for the reasons, OHR is not giving any additional comments about the reasons, as was the case in all previous vetting processes.

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): Could you please clarify one thing for me. Are these three Ministers allowed to vote in the Government?

A: Avis Benes: They are not in the Government any longer.

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): I would like to hear your comment on the following – the OHR was involved in the formation of this Government and now 1/3 of the Government has been removed by the OHR. How can this be possible? One could have assumed that at least two out of the three would not be verified. Do they have a say in the Government's work?

A: Avis Benes: The entire process was more than transparent, clear and, after all, discussed here and at all other fora. Whether something could have been known in advance or not is speculation. The OHR is dealing with concrete information and facts and does not ground its decisions on the speculations.

Q: Denis Vila (RTV Mostar): There is something unclear to me. Namely, how many Ministers do we have today? Three and the Prime Minister?

A: Avis Benes: Don't you know how many Ministers there are in the Government? It is a matter of simple calculation.

Q: Denis Vila (RTV Mostar): Could you tell me how many of them we have? And they can make valid decisions, right? If that is so, we do not need these three at all. It is ridiculous!

A: Avis Benes: Is there any other question apart from this comment?

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): Question for OSCE – referring to your statement on administrative unification, it seems that this plan is not supported by the Cantonal Ministers. Could you tell us who did not support it and why?

A: Richard Medic: At yesterday's meeting in Siroki Brijeg there was a lot of resistance to issuing the instructions. I really cannot comment at this stage as to why there was such resistance, but next week the ministers will be

meeting again, negotiations will continue, and we hope to see a result by then.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): Could you precisely tell us which Cantonal Ministers were against it?

A: Richard Medic: As I am sure you can understand, while negotiations are ongoing I cannot say which Ministers were against [issuing the instructions]. Just to reiterate – these instructions really should be issued by the end of June. If there is not some kind of positive development soon there is a real danger that the implementation of the administrative and legal unification of Two Schools under One Roof won't be in place by the start of the next school year.

A: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA): Question for Capt. Magistretti. Yesterday, General Ward confirmed in Banja Luka that SFOR is breaking down the network of Karadzic's associates. Could we consider that these frequent actions in Eastern Herzegovina are connected to intentions to break Karadzic's network?

A: Capt. Magistretti: First of all, I would like to stress that our investigations are conducted in the whole area of operation of SFOR, not only in the RS Republic. All war crime indictees are major obstacle to the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. As I told you last week, our troops are trying to tighten the net around these persons indicted for war crimes. But over the last few days operations were conducted in order to keep […] weapons it is possible in order to avoid problems for the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. And in these operations we got quite good results for the last few operations.