

Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OHR urges finalization of the process of adoption of Constitutional amendments in C7
OSCE	Richard Medic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OSCE donates six fax machines to Trebinje PSC• Municipalities work to improve relations with media and citizens
SFOR	Capt. Magistretti	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harvest Campaign

Avis Benes - OHR:

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I wish you a warm welcome to today's press conference on behalf of the IOs seated in Mostar.

On behalf of the OHR I have one point for you today regarding the finalization of the process of adoption of Constitutional amendments in this Canton.

As many of you may know, it is seven months since the election and a government has still not been formed in Herzegovina-Neretvan canton. The citizens of the canton are paying the price for this political irresponsibility. The parties involved are discrediting themselves and their Canton in the eyes of the citizens and the international community. It is not the job of the OHR to form governments. But it is our job to remind the political parties of their responsibilities if the interests of the citizens are being undermined. Much of the debate in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton has been about who will be appointed to positions that have been abolished following the enactment of the constitutional amendments last year. We have to reiterate once again that under these amendments, the position of Deputy Cantonal Prime Minister was abolished, along with the positions of Deputy Ministers, Governor and Vice-governor. Discussion on this is superfluous.

In sum, OHR considers that political parties should stop stalling this process on the account of issues which are contrary to the Federal Constitution and the High Representative's Decision and they should consistently implement amendments to the Cantonal Constitution. By prolongation of the process the parties only undermine their own credibility and continue ignoring the needs of people they are supposed to serve.

That's all on behalf of the OHR. Now I give the floor to Richard and OSCE.

Richard Medic - OSCE

Thank you Avis. Just two short points from OSCE today.

As part of its ongoing co-operation with local authorities in eastern Republika Srpska, OSCE is donating six fax machines to the Trebinje Public Security Centre. The fax machines will be handed to the Chief of the Trebinje Public Security Centre in a small ceremony to be attended by OSCE and EUPM representatives in Trebinje today. These fax machines will provide valuable technical assistance to law enforcement authorities in the region, for whom swift and effective communications are essential for tackling crime. "The Trebinje police plays a vital role in upholding the rule of law in a region often considered to be a frontline in illegal border activity," Director of OSCE Regional Centre Mostar, Ambassador Thomas Young, said today. He added: "We hope that this donation will further help the Trebinje Public Security Centre work with the State Border Service and other local authorities in fighting crime."

My second point is a media advisory. Leaders of ten municipalities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina are taking a crucial step in improving their communication with the media and the citizens they serve. On Thursday, 15 May and Friday, 16 May, these municipalities will take part in the first session of the OSCE Public Outreach Initiative. During the five-week workshops, local experts in public information and public relations will assist the municipalities devise strategies to improve their communication with the public. This is the second round of the Public Outreach Initiative. Twenty municipalities – including Mostar South West, Capljina, Trebinje and Jablanica –

successfully completed the training earlier this year, and have already seen dramatic improvements in their relations with citizens and the media. OSCE Regional Center Mostar now welcomes municipalities Mostar Stari Grad and Siroki Brijeg to the Public Outreach Initiative. Media are cordially invited to join representatives of these and other municipalities attending the first of the five workshops, to be held on Friday, 16 May, 10:30 hrs at the Hotel Park in Livno.

That's all from the OSCE today.

Avis Benes - OHR:

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

Capt. Magistretti - MNB SE

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. In a short time SFOR will carry out "Harvest" campaign in vicinity of your homes. Main goal of this campaign is to collect illegally detained weapon and/or ammunition, with intention to maintain safe and secure environment. I would like to remind you that "Harvest" campaign is a joint initiative of both BiH armed forces, local authorities and police in co-operation with SFOR and EUPM, whose task is to remove all illegally detained weapon, ammunition and other war-like materials from circulation. As usual, illegally detained weapon and/or ammunition can be surrendered to SFOR soldiers, local police or at the weapon designed collection points. Identity of the persons who surrender their weapon voluntarily will stay anonymous and no charges will be filed against them. "Harvest" campaign active collection phase will start on May 19, and will end on June 30 this year.

Also this morning I brought some video-tapes about ICTY for you. Local TV stations are allowed to broadcast video material. Please help yourself.

Thank you.

Avis Benes - OHR

Thank you. And now your questions please.

Questions:

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): I have a question for the OHR regarding the C7 Government. As you probably saw, our TV announced the names of candidates nominated by Mr. Coric. The OHR confirmed it has received the list as well. What is your comment on the fact that there are two independent candidates? We all know which parties won the elections and if there are two non-party affiliated candidates it means that the election results were not respected?! Also, what do you think about the appointment of Mr. Bilic having in mind the facts that late Hrnjicic was killed on February 28th and so far no results of the investigation have been announced and that this is just one out of 30 such cases.

A: Avis Benes: As for the content of the proposal and concrete names I think there is no need for the OHR to speak about it at this point of time. Apart from that and purely theoretically speaking, I think that every party is entitled to put the name of a candidate it wants and it does not necessarily need to be a party's candidate. I am not referring to this concrete proposal but purely theoretically.

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): I forgot to add that the PM designate has not contacted parties at all.

A: Avis Benes: You should ask the PM designate and political parties about it. This is really not on the OHR to comment on. As you stated yourself, we have confirmed that we received a proposal from Mr. Coric last week.

As for the concrete name you have just mentioned, let me correct you – it is not an appointment but proposal for appointment.

As far as the comment on that very individual is concerned, he is a candidate for the post which is as a rule a subject to the vetting procedure. Once the vetting procedure starts, post of the Minister of Interior will fall under the vetting procedure and position of the OHR about that will be known at that very moment.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): Question for OHR. SBiH withdrew from the Commission for Drafting Statute of Mostar. You previously said you do not want to publicly comment until you receive official information. I believe this arrived by today. What is your comment on this and what does it mean for the work of the Commission?

A: Avis Benes: We were also hoping that some official information would arrive by today because it is hard to consider statement given by someone to a daily paper seriously as an official notification. As far as the OHR and Commission Secretariat are concerned, we have not received this information. Perhaps, it was sent to the City Administration or someplace else.

As for the work of this Commission, you should ask the Commission itself. I can only reiterate our general position which is that this Commission is a historical opportunity for the citizens of Mostar to decide about their city and, of course, its success will to a great extent depend on how far will political parties go in giving preference to the City of Mostar over the political point-scoring or what they believe political point-scoring is.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): One addition – In an interview for our radio, SBiH representative Mr. Omerovic explained that the reasons for the withdrawal of their member from the Commission are – nothing has been done at two previously held meetings; they were held in a kind of anaemic atmosphere and what is interesting is that the member of SBiH Mr. Bakir Krpo was told that the OHR was not content with his work in this Commission and that the OHR practically asked for his withdrawal from the Commission.

A: Avis Benes: In any case, I can confirm that the information you were given is regarding the OHR definitely inaccurate. The OHR has given no comments about any of the Commission's members. Neither we want nor intend to. We did not make any influence during the process of election of the members let alone to comment on their participation. After all, we are talking about only two meetings in which some very operational issues were discussed. In sum, this alleged OHR standpoint is completely invented.

Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA): Commander of the NATO South wing paid a visit to BiH yesterday. Could you tell us whether there will be some changes of SFOR conduct in relation to the war crimes indictees now after that visit?

A: Capt. Magistretti: Yesterday, during the press conference in Sarajevo the SFOR Spokesperson gave all details about the meeting held in Sarajevo, details about the meeting among Admiral Charlson, SFOR Commander General Ward and local authorities. As you are aware our first mission is always, as usual, to maintain safe and secure environment but of course, our will, the will of all the IC is also to detain persons indicted of war crimes. So I can confirm there is no change in our will and in our behaviour.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): I would like to know if you have received SDP's new document on the reorganization of Mostar and what is your view on this?

A: Avis Benes: Was it recently released?

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): Some ten days ago.

A: Avis Benes: I am not aware of it which does not mean that perhaps we have not received it. I will check and get back to you.