

# Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HR gives eight principles to the members of the Mostar Commission</li><li>• OHR sends letter to SDP regarding the Mostar Commission</li><li>• Anti-Crime Summit at the OHR</li><li>• Update on Bulldozer process</li></ul>

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## **Avis Benes - OHR:**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I wish you a warm welcome to today's press conference on behalf of the OHR only. The reason for which we waited a little bit is because our colleagues from SFOR said they might be coming. It seems they won't due to other obligations.

On behalf of the OHR, I have two important points regarding the processes in Mostar.

The first one pertains to yesterday's session of the Mostar Commission for creation of Mostar Statute. Yesterday, Senior Deputy High Representative Enver Schroembgens handed over the letter of the High Representative Paddy Ashdown to the Commission members, emphasising the eight principles, which should be applied in their work and which are in the line with the Dayton Peace Agreement. Let me mention these eight principles, which were given to all Commission members yesterday:

- 1) There are no changes of the current boundaries of the City of Mostar;
- 2) Establishment of unified and downsized administration for the City of Mostar, which will put an end to the existence of the parallel structures and provide efficiency and integration of the City of Mostar;
- 3) Composition of the City Administration should reflect the last census;
- 4) Establishment of a joint budget for the City of Mostar;
- 5) Establishment of such mechanisms which will provide sufficient revenues for the City to comply with its responsibilities
- 6) Establishment of a single Assembly and electoral system which will provide:
  - a) representation of all constituent nations and the others
  - b) representation from all parts of Mostar
- 7) To provide full respect of the principle of responsibility in office;
- 8) To provide establishment of the institutional mechanism for safeguard the vital interests of all constituent peoples.

These are the framework principles emphasised in the letter of the High Representative. It is now up to the Commission to translate these principles into the concrete document and start working. This process is in their hands. The citizens of Mostar and their representatives will decide about the future of Mostar and will enjoy a full support of the OHR. The OHR wishes them a successful work because the citizens of Mostar do indeed deserve a better future as well as engaged and accountable officials.

Regarding the fact that the Commission was incomplete at yesterday's meeting, as SDP member did not attend the meeting, I can say that the OHR addressed a letter to the SDP, emphasising that the future of Mostar is far too important to its citizens to allow further postponement of the work of this Commission. The OHR called upon the SDP to reconsider its decision on non-participation in the work of the Commission before another solution is reached next week, which would provide for an equal representation of all groups and nations in Mostar. These

were the two points on behalf of the OHR regarding yesterday's meeting of the Commission.

Thirdly, here is the media advisory regarding today's activities of the OHR. The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will hold a meeting of government officials responsible for fighting crime, this afternoon. The meeting will be attended by Federation Interior Minister Mevludin Halilovic, RS Interior Minister Zoran Djeric, State Border Service Director Nijaz Spahic, BiH Security Minister Barisa Colak, SIPA Head Sredoje Novic, and EUPM Commissioner Sven Frederiksen. The topic of today's meeting is the BiH's role in the regional battle against organised crime. More details will be available at the press opportunity today at 15.45.

Fourthly, some information about the Bulldozer measures. Yesterday, you could see that the OHR expressed its hope that the first phase of the Bulldozer process will be successfully completed this week taking into consideration that both entity and state Parliaments are going to discuss reforms from this package of reforms. Some moments ago, we have received a new brochure about the Bulldozer initiative – 50 economic reforms in 150 days. It is available here. It gives you details related to each one of the reforms and quotes opinions of the local businesspersons. The High Representative called upon the BiH parliamentarians to demonstrate seriousness when it comes to the adoption of the Bulldozer reforms. We hope this process will be completed soon and more importantly implemented in practice.

That's all on behalf of the OHR. Thank you. And now your questions please.

## Questions:

**Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88):** Could you comment on the reasons for non-participation in the work of the Commission mentioned by SDP in yesterday's press release? My second question pertains to, of course, the Government's formation. There was a sort of presentation of positions of HDZ, SBiH and SDA last week in Sarajevo. What does it mean? Can we expect from the OHR to take certain steps?

**A: Avis Benes:** As for the reasons, I would not like to say more about it except that the OHR thinks that all criteria for the establishment of the Commission were complied with. The fact that we addressed a letter to the SDP speaks for itself. The OHR is of the opinion that everyone who has a chance to participate in such an important process should not miss that chance and should participate.

As for your second question regarding the formation of the Cantonal Government, unfortunately we do not have any indications that some progress has been achieved. We keep on calling upon those responsible for resolution of this question to find a solution as soon as possible.

**Q: Zvonimir Jukic (Onasa):** I have a question regarding the Commission too. When Mr. Ashdown paid a visit to Mostar he said this Commission should consist of 12 members. In case that SDP member continues to refuse to participate in the work of the Commission, will somebody from the City Council or the OHR fill in this position? Secondly, political parties which participated in the establishment of the Commission and which participate in the work of the Commission were requested to include a representative of minority returnees from both sides of the city and from all three constituent nations? Is there a chance that one of them replaces a member from SDP in the Commission or you intend to resolve this issue in another manner?

**A: Avis Benes:** As for the number of members of the Commission, the High Representative gave certain suggestions. The suggestion was that the number of members does not exceed the number of 12. Concrete figure was not defined; he proposed this upper number for the sake of functionality and efficiency of the work of the Commission, so that this body should not be too large. We think this principle was complied with when the decision to appoint 9 members was taken.

Secondly, taking into consideration that it was decided that the Commission would consist of 9 members, we think it will be fully functional with 9 members chosen to the agreed principles. The letter was addressed to the SDP, and they have been asked to play a constructive role and occupy the position that belongs to them. However, if this is not the case, there will be a need to find another solution. It will be found very soon, next week and then you will be informed about it. Taking into consideration that the appointment of members was in the domain of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, it will probably be the same this time.

Thirdly, we have previously emphasised that transparency and comprehensiveness should be the guiding

principles for the work of the Commission and as far as I know all Commission members accepted it. Namely, the Commission remains open to the suggestions of citizens and presentations of their visions about the future of Mostar. Also, in the letter that the High Representative addressed to the Commission members he urged them to involve members of NGOs and civil society in their work.

**Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar):** I have a question regarding formation or better to say non-formation of the cantonal Government. Today's *Dnevni Avaz* carried out your statement that the SDA is the side that does not co-operate in this process. On the other hand, SDA is both officially and unofficially accusing OHR, particularly Mostar OHR, of being bias in this process. Could you tell us something about it?

**A: Avis Benes:** First of all, there is no Mostar or Sarajevo OHR. The OHR is one organisation with joint and co-ordinated stances. Secondly, statement published in today's *Dnevni Avaz* was misinterpreted in the sense that it was presented as my own stance. Every stance I give is the stance of the OHR and that should be clear to all given the position I perform.

**Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar):** On what grounds have you drawn such a conclusion?

**A: Avis Benes:** True, last week we said that SDA demonstrated a higher degree of non-cooperation. However, as we emphasise all the time we would not like to go into details given that we do not want to put ourselves in the role of the arbiter on every single detail in this process. It is the fact that citizens of this canton have been suffering for six months already because of such a quantity of political irresponsibility.