

Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	• Ambassador Jean-Pierre Berçot on the HNC Government • HR explains the Bonn Powers to lawyers in London
OSCE	Richard Medic	• HNC Government must act quickly
EUPM	Jon-Oskar Solnes	• Descriptive report on football match riot not enough • EUPM findings on football match riot • Two Internal Control investigations in Mostar • Public Complaints Bureau established shortly • Human Trafficking victim found in Tuzla
SFOR	Capt. Magistretti	• MNB SE Commander with media

Avis Benes – OHR:

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome to today's press conference of the International Organizations seated in Mostar. We are glad to welcome here today representative of the EUPM Mr. Jon Oskar Solnes. We know that you are also glad because that is what you have asked for.

On behalf of the OHR I have two points for you today. The first one refers to, so to say, our local problems. I believe that you all saw our yesterday's statement – that the vetting

procedure for ministerial positions which is underway at the OHR should not prevent the Government from starting its work, i.e. the Government should not postpone the beginning of its work. Also, regarding the formation of the Government, which happened on Monday, Deputy High Representative Ambassador Jean-Pierre Berçot fully welcomes the formation of the Government. This formation was long overdue, but is a necessary precondition for solution of numerous problems and issues that Canton 7 faces. Ambassador Berçot points out that now there is definitely no time for further politicization or political games, which has unfortunately been done very often and which are detrimental to all citizens of the Canton. He expects that the Government will start working without a delay and in a constructive spirit, especially tackling critical social and economic issues. Ambassador Bercot conveyed the following message: "Only if members of this Government headed with the Prime Minister will be true representatives of all citizens of this Canton, not just their own nations, they can be successful in their task. Now is the time to show the level of their political and moral responsibility since there should be no more excuses."

Second point I have refers to the activities of the High Representative. As you probably know, over the last week he has been on a very extensive journey, from Washington to London.

Tomorrow, the High Representative will give a speech in London to the Liberal Democrat Lawyers' Association, assessing the value and powers of the OHR itself, an office particular to BiH. The High Representative will recognise that the OHR is itself the result of a compromise "yet it has become the lynchpin of the International Community's recovery strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina." He will highlight that "OHR's ad-hoc nature and the sweeping powers given to the High Representative by the Peace Implementation Council has given the International Community in BiH a much greater degree of

responsiveness, flexibility and room to manoeuvre than exists in other, similar missions.” Commenting on his extra-ordinary powers, the High Representative will in his speech say “[they] have come to be seen as an immediate and effective sanction in the absence of efficient courts and against the backdrop of an inadequate system of parliamentary or popular political accountability. Yet each dismissal by the High Representative, it could be argued, diminishes the impetus to set in place the kinds of structures of accountability whose absence makes these dismissals necessary. By solving the problem by fiat, we remove the incentive for BiH to set in place its own mechanisms for solving the problem. Because of this, I have striven to avoid the easy fix”. The High Representative will explain his philosophy behind the use of his powers. He will say his role is “to stop the powerful abusing their power”. In a normal state this is done by the checks and balances of independent institutions and through the power of public opinion. The High Representative will say that this is why his actions are “aimed at creating the institutions of a modern European state; an independent judiciary, police force and communications regulator; a clean political system; the rule based structures which govern a modern free market economy.” The High Representative will say that he sees it more legitimate to use his powers to create these institutions than to interfere in the decisions those institutions take. In the end, the High Representative will also underline that assuring the Rule of Law is essential in any post-conflict region. He will underline that BiH has undertaken a broad range of reforms including; physical reconstruction, refugee return, democratic elections, multi-ethnic administrations and constitutional reform. The High Representative will highlight that none of these are sustainable without the rule of law and the economic reforms that will support transition, which is why his priorities have been ‘Justice and Jobs’. Let me say that this is the latest press release from the OHR. I would like to add that the High Representative has also been invited to hold the main speech at the annual conference of the IRC in

London, which is one of the main events in the NGOs network calendar. The main emphasis of his speech will be that lessons from BIH regarding reconstruction can be applied in Iraq and some other regions. Our office will inform you in detail about this speech tomorrow. The High Representative will end his journey with the EU Summit in Thessaloniki, where he is going to lobby for the interests of BIH and will meet Pope in Banja Luka on 22 June. Both of these statements are available in writing.

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

Richard Medic – OSCE

Thanks Avis. There is one point from the OSCE today and, not surprisingly, it refers to the formation of the Cantonal Government.

After eight-and-a-half months of having to endure political party feuding, irresponsibility and inaction, the citizens of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton finally have a Government which they can hold to account. After attending Monday's (16.6) Cantonal Assembly session, OSCE Regional Centre Director Ambassador Thomas Young noted that he was 'glad to see that the HDZ and SDA have set a precedent for future co-operation.' Nonetheless, the Ambassador warned that 'ongoing compromises between SDA and HDZ are essential for this Cantonal Government to be able to work effectively.' Given that many pressing issues in the HNC have been neglected in the past few months, OSCE draws attention to some of the urgent work that must be immediately undertaken by the new cantonal ministers.

OSCE awaits the opportunity to meet the new Minister for Construction, Urban Planning and Environment, so that key issues surrounding the finalisation of property law implementation may be addressed.

OSCE urges the new Minister for Education, Science, Culture

and Sport to issue the long-awaited instructions on administrative unification of 'two schools under one roof' in the HNC. The instructions must be issued immediately, so that administrative unification of these schools can be implemented by the start of the next school year.

OSCE also calls on the incoming Minister for Health, Labour, and Social Affairs to urgently address the long-pending legislation on Social Welfare, Civil Victims of War and the Protection of Families with Children. Establishing a legal framework to ensure the minimal level of social welfare for its citizens should be a top priority for the incoming HNC Government. Of course, for such core issues to be addressed, a budget must now be adopted.

OSCE therefore calls on the new Cantonal Minister for Finance to begin work on drafting a workable and sustainable budget, and for that budget to be quickly adopted by the Cantonal Assembly. Although we understand that budgetary resources are scarce, responsible allocation of such resources is an essential step in restoring citizens' trust in their elected representatives.

Avis Benes – OHR

Thank you Richard. Now, let's hear EUPM and Jon Oskar Solnes.

Jon-Oskar Solnes – EUPM:

Good morning from the EUPM. I am pleased to be here with you. I will discuss with you after the statements about the presence here from the EUPM. I know you have been unhappy but we will discuss that later.

My first point refers to the report on the football match riot by the Canton 7 police. The EUPM has obtained a copy of the Canton 7 police report on the riot that occurred after the football match in Mostar at the end of last month. The report

among other things contains statements from arrested people and also statements from police officers involved. The EUPM is currently evaluating thoroughly these findings but a final assessment will only be available in a few days. However, at this time the EUPM can state that the report is comprehensive and descriptive. Nevertheless, the report fails in several aspects, mainly by not being analytic enough. The report describes how the riot occurred stating that the crowd was mainly to blame. That may be the case, but the inadequate response of the police is not highlighted. The EUPM strongly believes that such a report should address how to move forward, that is better prepare the police to prevent such occurrences in the future.

Now, the EUPM has made its own review of what happened after the fateful football match in May and has come to several conclusions. We will not reveal all details here, but the EUPM would like to stress the key conclusion:

1. The uniform police was inadequately prepared for its task. This goes both for the operational part, but also importantly for the equipment. It is not wise to mix uniform police and support units in such a way that the uniform police is made vulnerable through the use of teargas, as it is not equipped to operate in a tear gas environment.
2. An obvious solution would be the closer inter-Cantonal co-operation between support units, especially when the needs for extensive crowd control can be identified in advance, as was the case regarding this particular football match.
3. The EUPM has drawn up seven major programmes to move the BiH police forward to European standards. One of them is called "Public Order and Security" and addresses needs, both regarding skills and equipment within the BiH police to deal with such incidents that are really complex in nature. Thus the EUPM in a structured manner is identifying the needs and will then make material and training available to the BiH

police as the mission proceeds.

Now, my third point – following the riot after the football match, two complaints were received by the Professional Standard Unit of the Canton 7 police, which both led to internal control procedures against two police officers. The EUPM, as it was supposed to, got a copy of both complaints. One is based on alleged violence used during an interview of a citizen called in after the riot. The other is based on excessive violence by a police officer during the skirmishes after the match. The EUPM will monitor the conclusion of both cases that should be available soon, as according to the rules such investigations must be concluded within 30 days.

This leads us to my fourth point which has to do with complaints against police. Canton 7 will soon see the formal establishing of a Public Complaints Bureau, that is already well underway, with the EUPM monitoring the process. Formal announcement has already taken place, both in the official gazette where the official decree was published and in major newspapers where staff vacancies were announced. The Criterion for the chairman of the bureau is quite strict, is must be a person holding a law degree and with ten years of professional experience. The bureau will have a staff of five, and already fourteen qualified individuals have applied for positions. The EUPM expects that the formal procedure in establishing the Public Complaints Bureau can be completed counted in weeks rather than months. The EU PM considers the establishing of a Public Complaints Bureau a major step towards instilling more confidence of the citizens in their police forces.

Just news from police report yesterday – the EUPM can report another good finding in Tuzla were a Human Trafficking victim from Romania was rescued during a search operation by the police. The owner of the premises where the young woman was found has been arrested.

Now, about the EUPM presence here. I know we have attempted to put a representative here earlier on. The Mission has been deployed in the field [end of tape] . We will have someone with permanent presence here as of August 1. In the meantime, me and my colleague will try to come occasionally from Sarajevo. Also, can address all the EUPM-related issues to Col. Bente Bech-Madsen who knows how to handle media issues.

Capt. Magistretti – SFOR:

Ladies and Gentlemen good morning.

Yesterday MNBSE Commander Brigade General Gian Marco Chiarini had organised an informal gathering and invited all media representatives. During this informal gathering in Mostar Europe base, Brigade General Chiarini had stresses that all MNBSE and SFOR operations are balanced within the whole area of responsibility. Our activities are equally distributed within our area of operations. All persons indicted for war crimes at large present major obstacle to the implementation of DPA. Beside our main mission to insure safe and secure environment, we are trying to help local authorities in their efforts to bring PIFWCs to the justice.

Thank you.

Avis Benes – OHR:

Thank you SFOR. Before we proceed with your question I have two technical issues regarding your Press and ID cards. It has been drawn to my attention that some of you do not wear your press or ID cards and that you are allowed to enter by being recognised. I would like to ask you to avoid this in the future. Also, I would like to ask you to wear visitor cards while at the OHR premises as I have been told that you are persistently avoiding that. I hope you understand that this is a regular procedure and would like to ask you to respect it.

Questions:

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): I have a question for OHR, EUPM and SFOR. Avis, how long does the vetting procedure for ministerial positions last?

Regarding the same issue, a question for EUPM – is there a case involving C7 Minister of Interior Bilic – is it being discussed?

Yesterday HINA reported that SFOR has increased its presence in eastern Herzegovina. Could you confirm this information?

A: Avis Benes: I'll give you a short reply. According to our rules, this procedure should not take more than 10 days.

A: Jon Oscar Solnes: As we are dealing with the Minister then it is more political thing so the OHR must do vetting, they will consult with us of course. We also try to do some background search of the people we are working with. We are mainly the Police Mission.

A: Capt. Magistretti: I can confirm that we have increased and we are still increasing our presence in the whole sector. It is not only along the border but in the whole area of responsibility. Our actions are always balanced. Public can see that these are not special operations, but just our presence. We are trying to tighten a net around criminals just to force them to surrender to the ICTY and to the International Community.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): Was this the case with the search for the General Gotovina?

A: Capt. Magistretti: This is one of the evidences that our operations are balanced for the whole area of responsibility. For General Gotovina, for the last week's operation – that was a special operation. We are now not doing a special operation in the border area of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Q: Zana Mrkonjic, HRT: Question for the OSCE. Which sources

are you using while gathering information about the economic and social situation in this country? The reason I am asking this is because according to information published on your website, around 50% of people in West Herzegovina Canton do not have running water and electricity, Medjugorje is a part of that Canton and the main occupation of people is sand quarrying.

A: Richard Medic: I do not think this is the forum to discuss this particular question. A couple of the things you mentioned have been drawn to our attention recently. Perhaps we can speak about this after the press conference rather than take up the time of other journalists here.

Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA): Mr. Solnes, how would you evaluate the silence of BIH politicians after the incidents at stadiums? Everything is left up to the journalists. Let me remind you that a few minutes after the recent incident in Kranj that happened after the water polo match between Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro, Croatian Prime Minister Ivica Racan referred to the behaviour of the Croatian fans as shameful. Politicians here are keeping silent about it.

A: Jon Oscar Solnes: I am well aware of the incident after the water polo match; we had problems in Brcko. There actually the police did OK job I would say, police reacted but there is room for improvement there as there is here. I just said we are the police mission not political mission. I can only give you my personal view on this. In most European countries, most politicians would be very disappointed to see such behaviour and I think they would express their concerns. However, in other European countries we have had crowd control problems in the past as you know. We probably all know about how difficult it was to control football fans in many European championships. So it is not just a problem that is known in this region but in other European countries and that is why it is so important to train the police to deal with this.

Q: Tina Jelin, Studio 88: I have a question for OSCE – you said that one of the priorities is administrative unification of two schools under one roof. I have information that it was agreed to have two mixed classes in the Old Grammar School in Mostar but that the Croat side gave it up a few days ago. Could you confirm that?

A: Richard Medic: All I can confirm at this stage is that OSCE is continuing its meetings with the school director and local authorities. But if and when there is a concrete proposal for the Old Gymnasium in the future you'll be the first to know.