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Contact Group

Members of the Contact Group met in Brussels on 15 May to assist in the preparation of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board ministerial meeting in Sintra on 30 May. The High Representative, Carl Bildt, presented proposals for the agenda to be discussed at Sintra.

The Contact Group reaffirmed its commitment to the full implementation of the Peace Agreement and expressed serious concern at the lack of determination by the authorities in BiH to honour their own commitments, in particular those referred to in the London Conclusions of December 1996 and in the UN Security Council Resolution 1088. Areas where authorities had not demonstrated sufficient co-operation included the following:

- Establishment of functioning central institutions as defined in the Peace Agreement and dissolution of old institutions rendered unconstitutional by the Peace Agreement.
- Ensuring freedom of movement, freedom of communication and freedom of the press.
- Respect for human rights, the rule of law and the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return freely.
- Co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague.

- Adoption and implementation of economic laws and regulations which are needed for the functioning of BiH as a single state (i.a. common currency, customs regulations)
- Developing democratic, restructured police forces fully supporting the rule of law.

On the basis of recommendations submitted by the High Representative, the Contact Group prepared points for discussion and decision by ministers at the Sintra PIC Steering Board ministerial. These decisions would be based on the principle of conditionality in dealing with the authorities in BiH. The Contact Group stressed that the international community expected and demanded in exchange for its high level of support to BiH that all parties would accept their primary responsibility for implementation and fully abide by their signed commitments to the Peace Agreement.

The meeting followed an informal brainstorming session on Bosnia of the European Union's Political Directors, meeting at the Val Duchesse in Brussels. This meeting was also addressed by Mr Bildt.

BiH Federation

The BiH Federation Government convened a session in Mostar on 13 May. They agreed on several draft laws and concluded that a disputed article in the Draft Law on New Municipalities be referred to the Federation Assembly. In addition to agreeing on Draft Laws for Insurance of Pensioners and Invalids and a Draft Law on Telecommunications, the Government also proposed Amendments to the Income Tax Law.

The Federation House of Representatives (HoR) met on 14 May to discuss the Draft Law on Split and New Municipalities. Following the adoption of the disputed Law by a 76:26 vote, Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) deputies walked out of the session protesting that the borders of the Usora municipality should encompass a larger area.

The Federation House of Peoples also debated this issue during its session on 15 May. As no progress could be made, the Collegium of the House, with the participation of the Federation President and Vice President, Vladimir Soljic and Ejup Ganic respectively, and the Federation Prime Minister Edhem Bicakcic proposed the formation of a special working group comprising representatives from both Houses of the Parliament which would examine all the amendments and suggestions proposed thus far. The working group, which will also include the Federation President and Vice President, will submit its report to the Federation Parliament by 24 May.

Human Rights

On 8 May a Croat official of the Social Democratic Party was arrested in the village of Tramnosnica, in the RS municipality of Pelagicevo. He was initially incarcerated in Modrica where he was taken before the Modrica court on 9 May. The court ordered his detention for investigation of war crimes charges, after which he was transferred to Doboj prison. UN IPTF visited him on 9 May and reported him to be tired but otherwise in a fair condition. Principal Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Michael Steiner, wrote to RS President Biljana Plavsic calling on the RS authorities to release the detained man immediately, as his detention is a clear violation of the Rome Agreement which stipulates that all cases of suspected war crimes must be reviewed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

UN IPTF / UNMIBH

On 13 May the UN International Police Task Force (UN IPTF) officially opened a new district headquarters in Brcko. The opening ceremony was attended by UN SRSG, Ambassador Kai Eide, IPTF Commissioner, Manfred Seitner and Deputy High Representative for Brcko, Bill Farrand. The current international police presence in Brcko of 144 is scheduled to increase to 258 by the end of May.

The UN Security Council passed on 16 May a resolution authorising the strengthening of the IPTF force in BiH by an additional 120 policemen. UN members were urged to provide qualified police monitors and other support for the

force which currently numbers around 1.700.

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ambassador Kai Eide addressed journalists at the Holiday Inn in Sarajevo on 15 May. Describing the progress of the civilian implementation as “too slow and too uneven”, Ambassador Eide expressed concern that the fundamental attitude of many of the leaders had not changed. This trend was linked with the “attention fatigue” of the international community, he said. *“When houses are blown up, human rights violated and freedom of movement and return prevented, then donors’ fatigue is an inevitable result”*. Pointing out that these incidents affected each citizen in BiH he said that the time had come for ordinary people to react to such developments, which much too often were *“not spontaneous, but organised, inspired and -at the very least - tolerated”*.

Ambassador Eide also spoke of the new checkpoint policy, which came into effect on 15 May. According to this policy there will be no checkpoints, he said, adding that statements about the importance of maintaining Bosnia as a united country had to be matched on the ground by a scrupulous respect for the new checkpoint policy. Criticising RS and Bosnian Croat authorities for recent freedom of movement and right to return violations in Gajevo, Brcko, Jajce and Drvar, Eide expressed hope that the authorities at every level would work with IPTF to put a stop to such practices.

Ambassador Eide concluded on an encouraging note, recalling the recent announcement in Geneva by the Federation Minister for Refugees that 11,200 houses and apartments would be made available for minority returns to the Sarajevo, Zenica, Doboj and Tuzla areas. Such statements should be followed up with concrete proposals in the near future, said Eide.

Mentioning the recently improved situation in Mostar, Eide appealed for *“swift and decisive”* political approval for the new *“Book of Rules”* for cantonal police, which would help put the new police force in place. Citing the “crystal clear investigations” into the Mostar incidents in February as a contributing factor to recent positive developments in Mostar, Ambassador Eide expressed his hope that additional resources, including modern equipment, would soon be provided by contributing nations in order to enhance IPTF’s investigative and deterrent capabilities.

Right to Return

The Federation government announced on 12 May that it was ready to accept about 50.000 Serb refugees and displaced persons. Speaking to journalists in Sarajevo last week, the head of the Federation government office for refugees and displaced persons, Sulejman Gareb said that the government has offered nine municipalities as part of a programme for the repatriation and accommodation of refugees.

In a similar move, authorities in eastern Mostar announced that they too are ready to take back 100 Serb families, while those in Gorazde in south-east Bosnia publicly invited Serb refugees to return to their homes. Gareb also added that the canton of Una-Sana in the Federation is ready to join in the Serb refugee repatriation programme.

Mostar

In an attempt to counter a dispute between Bosniac and Bosnian Croat authorities over who should control an important hydro-electric power plant located on a former front line area on the River Neretva, Head of OHR South regional office, Sir Martin Garrod, convened a meeting on 13 May.

The meeting was attended by representatives from both sides, including Mostar Mayor, Ivan Prskalo and his Deputy, Safet Orucevic. Both sides agreed to an interim measure of placing a limit of ten local police officers from each side at the plant to reduce tensions in the area while IPTF and SFOR would continue to closely monitor the site. Both Parties agreed that a higher Federation-level meeting would be beneficial in helping to reach a final solution.

The OSCE announced on 12 May that, in conjunction with the Institute for Democracy in Strasbourg, they had interviewed 35 young political candidates from representing 16 different political parties for the September elections. 15 – 20 of them are to be selected for a seminar on the role of the Municipal Councilor, to be held in Budapest from 16-22 June. The seminar is organised by the Institute of Democracy, with OSCE support, the Council of Europe and the Westminster Foundation.

Open Broadcast Network

The Steering Committee of the Open Broadcast Network (OBN) Governing Council, with representatives from the EU Commission, the US, the UK and OHR met in Brussels on 13 May. The Committee was informed of developments covering management, financial, personnel, programming and technical aspects of the project. The relevance of OBN was determined to be greater than ever, both in advance of the municipal elections in September and as a long-term addition to media pluralism in BiH.

One of the most significant developments is the expansion of coverage in the Sarajevo area following an agreement with the Sarajevo station TV X to carry the full OBN programme output. This agreement came into effect on 7 May enabling the audiences in Sarajevo to follow the six-hour-long schedule in its entirety. Previously, the OBN's Sarajevo affiliate only carried the central daily news programme "TV INFO".

Finally, a selection board consisting of three prominent BiH media specialists – Hamza Baksic, Zoran Udovicic and Perica Vucinic – has been set up to steer the process of recruiting a long term CEO and programming director for the network. The team will look at the applications received and make recommendations as well as provide guidance in establishing the teams that would work with the new management structure.

European Commission

The European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) announced on 9 May that it is providing a grant of 156.000.000 DM in humanitarian aid channelled through its partners, including UNHCR, UNWFP, ICRC, and a number of NGOs with the aim of enabling essential reconstruction work to be carried out. The European Union has been at the forefront of international humanitarian effort in the former Yugoslavia channelling more than 2.5 billion DM worth of assistance through ECHO. The strategy for 1997 is to gradually adjust the humanitarian aid programme with over 80 million DM to be spent on encouraging the return of refugees and displaced persons.

Economic Reconstruction

Deputy High Representative for Economic Issues and US Special Envoy for Economic Reconstruction in BiH, Mr. Claude Ganz, announced on 14 May that the US Agency for International Development (USAID) would provide over US \$ 5 million for the rehabilitation of key northern railroad links in BiH and Croatia. Work will include completion of the Sava Bridge, demining of the tracks and bridges, rehabilitation of the track from Tuzla to Brcko and the construction of 14 km of new track.

Acknowledging the political difficulties that had so far prevented an appreciable revival in rail travel throughout BiH, Mr. Ganz said the new repairs did not mean that trains would start running immediately *"We have found a way to make Bosnia's trains connect to Europe. Now it's up to the political leadership to make it happen"*, said Mr. Ganz.

The Prime Ministers of the RS and the Federation, Gojko Kilickovic and Edhem Bicakcic met in Sarajevo on 14 May to discuss a number of issues related to trade between the two Entities. They agreed in principle on co-operation regarding the Ljubinja mine near Prijedor, which would deliver iron ore to the steel works in Zenica, with the

understanding that part of the Zenica products are to be sold in the RS.

After the talks, the two Prime Ministers said that the question of how their respective authorities would control trade between the two Entities remained unresolved, but stressed that trade control was necessary in order to ensure that the budgets of the Entities do not suffer any unnecessary losses.

The Srpski Brod oil refinery was re-opened on 13 May, after a five-year break. Speaking at the opening ceremony, the refinery's director, Vojin Mujicic said that the reactivating of the refinery will provide a major boost to the Republika Srpska's power supply system.

The refinery can process between 1.500 and 1.800 tons of crude oil a day. Before the conflict in BiH, the refinery processed 9.000 tons of crude oil daily, accounting for 14 percent of the energy balance of the former Yugoslavia.

Looking Ahead

30 May

Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council meets in Sintra, Portugal

2 June

EU General Affairs Council, Luxembourg

See our [Chronology](#) for a full list of activities

The OHR Bulletin is produced by the Public Affairs Department of the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo and aims to give an overview of what is happening on the ground in the civilian implementation of the Dayton Agreement.

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