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Please consult our [Bulletin Category List](#) for related information

Joint Institutions

The Presidency of BiH held its thirteenth session in the National Museum, Sarajevo on 20 January. Presidency members Mr. Kresimir Zubak and Mr. Momcilo Krajisnik attended, while the Presidency Chair, Mr. Alija Izetbegovic, was represented by Mr. Haris Silajdzic, Co-Chair of the Council of Ministers. Mr. Zubak presided over the session.

A [Presidency statement](#) released after the session, announced that the Presidency had once again considered the three [World Bank](#) projects on the reconstruction of BiH. They expressed a positive position with respect to these agreements, but estimated that the decision on the signing of them should be brought at the next session. According to the procedure adopted at the eighth Presidency session, Mr. Alija Izetbegovic would sign the agreement with the World Bank.

The Presidency also welcomed the work accomplished to date by the Council of Ministers, and instructed that a report be submitted about the Presidency's previous instructions in time for the next Presidency session.

Accreditation for the following new Ambassadors were accepted by the Presidency:

Ambassador	Country
Mr. Michele Valensise	Italy
Mr. Ricardo Diez-Hochleitner	Spain
Mr. Anatolij Sostak	Ukraine
Mr. Ahmed Ali An-Ansari	Qatar
Mr. Bernard Devenport	Ireland
Mr. Carlos Ramon Bula Camachoa	Columbia

Peace Implementation Council

The Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council held a meeting in Brussels on 21 January for the first of their regular overviews this year. General satisfaction was expressed with the progress of the setting up of the common institutions. However, the pressing need for cooperation from Parties regarding the Brcko arbitration and the need for further work on the common institutions was noted. In addition, immediate economic reforms needed to be implemented. The Steering Board noted the establishment of two new Task Forces to deal with the problems of return of refugees and freedom of movement issues, one arising from the [London Peace Implementation Conference](#), the other from Geneva on 20 January. Municipal elections were a major challenge for 1997, and the Steering Board received a report from the Head of the OSCE Mission in BiH, Ambassador Robert Frowick. He confirmed that all questions raised by the rules and regulations, monitoring and supervision were being pursued urgently by the OSCE.

Federation Parliament

The 3rd session of the Federation House of Representatives (HoR) was held on 22 – 23 January 1997 in Sarajevo. The session was boycotted by the HDZ members with the as yet unresolved questions of the selection of the new Federation President and Vice President and the non-acceptance of the “new municipalities” agenda item cited as the reasons for their action.

Due to the absence of the HDZ deputies, the HoR only discussed a few of the 31 agenda items and adopted a number of laws, including the Law on Amendments to the Law on Federal Ministries, the Law on Salaries in federal Judicial System, and the Law on Quality Control of Imported and Exported Goods. Other issues, including the rules of procedure of the Federation HoR, were forwarded to the Government and the Legislative Commission for comments before they are placed on the agenda for the next HoR session.

Decisions reached at this session include increasing the number of Federation Government ministries from 14 to 15 and convening a special session of the HoR to discuss the issues of ethnic cleansing and the security of citizens in the Federation. This session is expected to take place during the next three weeks.

War Crimes Tribunal

Following her visit to the region, the Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Justice Louise Arbour, expressed a guarded optimism with regard to the increased willingness by governments to cooperate with the Tribunal. Arbour, speaking after her visit to BiH, Croatia and Serbia, said that government officials had got the message that the international community was serious about wanting suspected war criminals to stand trial. *“I believe that the discussions I’ve had here with the various government officials reflect a clear understanding on that point”*, she told reporters in Belgrade.

Right to Return

SFOR has repaired the important bridge over the river Gnjici located in the Zone of Separation (ZOS) near Celic in North East Bosnia which had been badly damaged by an explosion on 18 January, rendering it unusable for vehicular traffic. International organisations, including the OHR, condemned the attack and emphasised that the programme of returns will proceed in accordance with the established procedures, regardless of any such attempts to hinder the process. The bridge provides access from the Federation side to the village of Gajevi. This repair work has now enabled over 35 Bosniac families to return to their homes, a process which started 23 January. The families which received the necessary approvals for return are currently busy repairing their homes and are restricting their presence in the area to the daytime as living conditions remain difficult. The construction of a housing settlement of pre-fabricated containers and trailers is expected to be completed by 10 February 1997. Meanwhile, the IPTF headquarters in Sarajevo announced that international policemen will start joint patrols of the area with RS police. This decision was reached following consultation with SFOR and the patrols will be conducted in two shifts.

Coalition for Return

The Coalition for Return, a grass-roots movement of refugee and displaced persons associations, visited the northern Bosnian town of Modrica on 20 January to present its aims and generate discussion related to return issues. The Coalition group met with representatives of the local Red Cross, Drvar refugees accommodated in a school, the Mayor of Modrica and representatives of the Socialist Party of RS.

The Coalition was acquainted with the situation in the town where 15.000 of the 31.000 inhabitants are displaced persons from Drvar, Glamoc, Tuzla, Zenica and other cities from central Bosnia. One of the principal obstacles cited was the lack of information and assurances of security for any returnees. Reciprocity was also pointed out as a necessity for any return process.

Unfortunately, the scheduled meeting with the Modrica chief of police (which had come at his request) did not take place as he failed to appear. Some restrictions were also placed on the TV crew which accompanied the Coalition delegation as it was only allowed to film the meeting in the local Red Cross while footage of the town had to be taken from the vehicle.

Humanitarian & Refugee Issues

Representatives of a number of international organisations held an informal meeting in Geneva on 20 January 1997 to discuss a joint approach to integrating refugee return and economic reconstruction priorities. The meeting was hosted by Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and chaired by the High Representative Carl Bildt. It was attended by representatives of the European Commission, the World Bank, the International Management Group, the Commission for Real Property Claims and the Economic Task Force.

The High Representative stressed that to overcome obstacles to minority return coordination between humanitarian, economic and political efforts must be maximized. There was a need to resolve the contradiction between conditionality and the revitalization of the economy. The question of refugee return could not be seen in isolation from solving the problem of DPs who are taking up limited housing space, he said. Harmonizing the property laws between the entities was also a priority, and co-ordinated pressure from the international community, including threats to stop or slow down housing reconstruction, was required to facilitate this process.

The participants agreed to set up a Reconstruction and Return Task Force (RRTF) to work in close coordination with the Housing Task Force. The key roles would go to UNHCR, the World Bank, the EC, the IMG, the Commission for Real Property Claims and the OHR. Representatives of these organizations would meet weekly on an operational level in Sarajevo. The task force will develop a paper on a joint approach to the questions raised in this meeting by early March to complement the UNHCR's regional planning time frame and to anticipate the upcoming donor conference. A further meeting on a high level may be held in March to determine a plan for negotiations with

governments and donors.

* Starting on 6 February, a special new weekly news service for refugees from BiH in Europe will be produced by the SAFAX news agency in Sarajevo. The service will be available and distributed by e-mail. All those interested in receiving this service should contact SAFAX on MEDIAPLAN_ZU@ZAMIR-SA.ztn.apc.org. This refugee newsletter project is being financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

Economic Assistance

On 21 January the European Commission (EC) donated 23 new buses to the BiH Federation. A further five buses is also being donated to the RS. The supply of buses forms part of 22 million ECU package of assistance from the Commission to the Sarajevo and BiH public transport systems. This consignment completes the deliveries under the Essential Aid Programme (EAP), which has so far supplied 35 buses at a cost of 4,040,000 ECU. In addition, the Commission has also spent 365,000 ECU on spare bus parts, over 4.5 million ECU on road maintenance equipment for both Entities and 1.075 million ECU for restoration of the 5 km Nedzarici-Ilidza tram line. The EC plans to spend a further 611,000 ECU funding the restoration of the Dobrinja trolley bus service.

Media Issues

Representatives of existing, new and potential obn donors met at OHR Brussels on 22 January ahead of the Governing Council, tentatively planned for 25 February, when pledges for Phase Two will be made.

Donors were given extensive presentations, including slides and videos, highlighting the progress so far and setting out the case for continuing international support for the network. There was a detailed discussion of the proposed business plan prepared by the Project Assistance Team (PAT), with an additional briefing on the plans for Banja Luka.

Donors expressed broad support for the proposal. Most of the discussion focused on the long-term structures and prospects for the network. Donors agreed to an OHR proposal for a Steering Committee to be set up providing a crucial layer of management, responsibility and accountability for the project between the PAT and the Governing Council. The composition of the Committee has yet to be finalised but it was agreed that it will include OHR, OSCE, the European Commission, the US and the Soros Foundation, as well as one or two representatives of the other bilateral donors. All those present agreed on the need to move fast and for the Committee to be available to support the PAT in the weeks ahead at the tactical level. Decisions of strategic significance would continue to be referred to the full Governing Council. Although this was not a pledging session, donor representatives also gave broad indications of the positive support they expected to be able to give towards achieving the \$ 7.4 m for Phase Two of the project.

Journalists from the Republika Srpska and the Federation are working together on producing a new paper, Ogledalo (The Mirror), which is set to appear as an insert in forthcoming issues of Front Slobode (Tuzla), Novi Prelom (Banja Luka), Alternativa (Doboj) and Ekstra Magazin (Bijeljina). The project is part-financed by USAID.

A workshop and training facility for young journalists has been established in Banja Luka. 164 candidates applied for the 36 available posts on the 3-week journalism course. The workshop is sponsored by the Association of Independent Journalists of the RS in conjunction with USAID.

The Sarajevo independent monthly magazine Dani held a promotion in Banja Luka on 17 January. In addition to the local media, those present included representatives of SFOR and USAID. In a further step towards breaking the inter-Entity media blockade in BiH, RS papers Alternativa, Panorama and Novi Prelom, and the Media Plan, AIM and Flash agencies have come together to organise the distribution in the RS of the January issue of Dani.

Succession Issues

The delegations of BiH, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia and FRY continued their search for an agreement during this year's first plenary conference on succession issues held at OHR Brussels on 22-24 January chaired by Sir Arthur Watts. The process, now in its sixth year, continues to be blocked by the lack of agreement among the delegations regarding the definition and identification of state property, as well as the different interpretations of the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia, with the FRY delegation arguing that the process was instigated by a violent secession of Slovenia, Croatia and BiH and not by agreement as suggested by the other delegations.

In an attempt to break the deadlock, the delegations of Slovenia and Croatia put forward a proposal calling for the process to be resolved through international arbitration; this was, however, rejected by the FRY delegation. At the close of the plenary, Sir Arthur Watts undertook to prepare a proposal for the apportionment of state archives as well as a list of embassies abroad which are also subject to division. Sir Arthur also proposed a series of bilateral talks before a new meeting of the five delegations in mid-February. This suggestion was accepted, in principle, by those present.

Representatives of the RS were also present in Brussels with a request calling for the framework of the process to be widened to also comprise the question of dividing the assets of the former Republic of BiH. This request was not accepted by the other delegations.

Looking Ahead

30 January

Council of Ministers, follow-up Quick Start Package presentation, Sarajevo

31 January

World Economic Forum, Davos.

11 February

3rd Media projects co-ordination meeting, Sarajevo

25 February

Governing Council, Open Broadcast Network, OHR Brussels

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

Apology

In OHR Bulletin Issue 31 dated 2 January it was erroneously reported that the US Red Cross had provided 800,000 DEM for the construction of a central heating system in Kladanj – we apologise for this error which repeated information passed in source material to OHR.

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. Suggestions and contributions are welcome and should be addressed to the Public Affairs Department of the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo (387-71) 447 275 ext. 562, Fax (387-71) 447 420. Callers from outside BiH dial via Brussels switchboard: Tel. (32-2) 737 7500 & Fax (32-2) 737 7501