

# **OHR Bulletin 22 - October 24, 1996**

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## **Presidency Meeting**

The members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), Mr. Alija Izetbegovic, Mr. Kresimir Zubak and Mr. Momcilo Krajisnik met on 22 October in the National Museum, Sarajevo. Mr. Krajisnik signed the Solemn Declaration which had been signed by the other two members of the Presidency in the ceremony at the National Theatre on 5 October. Mr. Krajisnik said in a brief statement afterwards that he was happy because *today's*

*agreement has contributed to peace and the desire for it to last as long as possible. Speaking about the Joint Institutions he said, I am convinced that they will function if we respect each other and develop a system of trust, and if we manage to establish equality.*

The Presidents issued a joint statement on arrangements for the functioning of the common institutions of BH, which set out the following:

1. Starting from the provisions of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in BH, signed on 14 December 1995 (hereafter the Peace Agreement), and wishing to contribute towards its full implementation, the members of the Presidency agreed to establish efficient organisation and framework for the functioning of the common institutions of BH.
2. The work of the common institutions of BH shall be based on the principles of equality of the Federation and the RS and the three constituent peoples in BH, of mutual tolerance, respect and cooperation in exercising all obligations under the Peace Agreement.
3. To ensure continuous functioning of the institutions, the Presidency has agreed a provisional arrangement for meetings of the Presidency, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Ministers, the Constitutional Court and the Central Bank. Under this arrangement the members of the Presidency have agreed that the Presidency shall meet in Sarajevo at the National Museum and at the Electro-technical Faculty in Lukavica.
4. A permanent arrangement on the premises, location and functioning of the Presidency, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Ministers, the Constitutional Court and the Central Bank, shall be agreed by consensus within six months.
5. In taking this decision the Presidency shall consider the various options for housing the institutions, including any existing buildings in Sarajevo or the possibility of new construction.
6. The next meeting shall take place at the Electro-technical Faculty at 14:30 on 25 October; the one following that at the National Museum on 29 October at 14:30. These meetings should be prepared through daily meetings between the Chiefs of Staff. There will also be meetings on security issues.

The High Representative welcomed the latest developments as constructive and positive.

## **Elections**

Head of the OSCE Mission in BH, Ambassador Robert Frowick, announced on 22 October that the Provisional Election Committee (PEC) had unanimously decided that the municipal elections, scheduled for 23-24 November should be postponed. Ambassador Frowick said that the new time-frame being considered for the local elections was between April and June of 1997. Asked why the decision to postpone had been taken, Ambassador Frowick deemed that the reasons were political rather than logistical saying, *The Parties have indicated that additional time was required to prepare for the elections.*

Reactions to the decision were positive. A statement by the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, welcomed the decision and commended Ambassador Frowick and the OSCE Mission for the efforts they had already made in preparation for the elections. *With the postponement of the local elections, the international community will now be in a better position to assure local elections according to the higher standards which we are seeking,* he said.

Mr. Bildt also said that the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) would now consider the different options for the local elections at its meeting in Brussels on 7 November in preparation for the Ministerial Meeting in Paris on 14 November. He added that the local elections would now be a centrepiece of the international efforts in BH next year and that the Parties were expected to cooperate fully with the efforts to make them as free and as fair as possible.

## North Atlantic Council

On 23 October, the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, briefed the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in Brussels on progress with the civilian implementation of the Peace Agreement. Mr. Bildt went on to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) for a briefing from General George Joulwan, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and from other NATO officials, on the deployment of Allied Land Forces Central Europe (LANDCENT) which is replacing the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) next month. Mr. Bildt also gave a presentation to a SHAPE intelligence conference on the developments in BH.

## Federation Forum

Early results from the Federation Forum meeting have brought about an agreement by the Federation partners that, in the transition period until a fully integrated police force is established throughout the canton, the Neretva Canton Minister and Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs will designate the senior Bosniak and Bosnian Croat police officials for the city of Mostar, who will alternate every 30 days as Chief and Deputy Chief of Police. This arrangement goes into effect on 28 October, with the Bosniak official serving the first tour of duty as Chief of Police.

## European Union

The Political Directors of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom visited Sarajevo on 21-22 October. In meetings with the members of the BH Presidency they conveyed the concern of their Governments over the delay in forming the new institutions of BH following the September elections. They expressed their full support for the efforts of the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, to establish a satisfactory basis for regular meetings of the Presidency; and they consulted closely with their American and Russian colleagues who were also in Sarajevo.

The Political Directors warmly welcomed the Agreement signed by the three members of the Presidency on 22 October and expect regular meetings to continue henceforth as well as the early appointment of the Council of Ministers and productive sessions of the House of Representatives.

Support was expressed for the OSCE decision to postpone the municipal elections until 1997 and they agreed to contribute to international supervision of those elections at the right time.

Issues of concern raised by the Political Directors included the failure to ensure freedom of movement, the return of refugees and the minimum level of human rights which exists throughout the country.

Proposals for taking forward the international community's involvement in BH beyond the end of 1996 was explained to the Presidency members who welcomed the plans and undertook to work with the High Representative, the European Union and other members of the international community in following them up.

## Republika Srpska

The inaugural session of the newly elected RS National Assembly was held in Banja Luka on 19 October. Former RS Health Minister, Dragan Kalinic, was elected new President of the RS National Assembly, whilst Miroslav Vjestica and Nikola Poplasen were elected Vice-Presidents. The Assembly was attended by deputies from the main RS Parties as well as those elected to represent the Federation. The session was also attended by Principal Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Michael Steiner, who said that the constitution of the RS Assembly was a strong support to the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

RS President, Biljana Plavsic, also pledged her respect for the integrity of BH saying that RS representatives would participate in the activities of the joint institutions in BH as equal partners. Among other things she said, *The situation on the ground cannot be changed. Dayton grants us some sovereignty but compels us to live with in the*

*framework of a state which is against our wishes. However, by signing [the Dayton Peace Agreement] we accepted to live in that state, and our signature is binding – we will respect the integrity of the joint Bosnia and Herzegovina, but there must also be respect for the territorial integrity of the RS as envisaged by the Dayton Agreement.*

## **Legal Issues**

Legal experts from the Council of Europe are visiting BH from the 18 – 25 October to assess current legislation on citizenship and permanent residence. This includes looking at application procedures for citizenship and passports in order to provide technical assistance in this field. The delegation met with representatives of the relevant ministries and of the Federation and BH Ombudsman's Institutions, in addition to local experts and international organisations.

## **Human Rights**

The Office of the High Representative released a statement on 17 October on the destruction of property at the site of the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka. The statement said that the OHR deplored the action being carried out by the RS authorities without consultation with the religious authorities. The destruction, which was viewed as a provocation, included the levelling of a house and the removal of trees on the site of the former mosque. A letter was sent from the OHR to the RS President, Mrs. Biljana Plavsic, requesting an urgent explanation. In Banja Luka, a number of senior international officials strongly denounced the demolition, including the Principal Deputy High Representative Ambassador Michael Steiner, who met with RS President Plavsic on 18 October and demanded a halt to the destruction of the property.

ECMM reported that a delegation of high-level Federation officials visited Livno on 21 October to meet with Bosniak community representatives and local authorities in an effort to calm rising tensions after several Bosniak homes were targeted by explosives last week.

UN IPTF report that in the last week more than 20 houses have been destroyed or damaged by explosives in villages located in the Zone of Separation (ZOS). International officials have called on Federation and RS leaders to use their authority to bring an end to the continued pattern of bombings in the area.

## **Freedom Of Movement**

UN IPTF reported that on 17 October approximately 150 demonstrators in the Croat-majority village of Domanovici stoned a commercial bus while it was on its inaugural run between Capljina and the east side of Mostar. Local police reportedly stood by while demonstrators attacked the vehicle of two international officials escorting the bus after IFOR troops fired warning shots into the air to disperse the crowd. The bus line is part of a plan developed by international organisations to facilitate assessment visits for displaced persons to their original homes in the area.

UNHCR reports that the Grbavica and Trnovo inter-Entity bus-lines are running without any problems or incidents. The Zenica – Banja Luka bus-line is also continuing to operate as per schedule.

On 20 October a 125 km access track between Sarajevo and the isolated eastern Bosnian town of Gorazde was formally opened and handed over to the Federation authorities by IFOR. This follows a nine month construction effort by IFOR involving 600 soldiers from ten countries. Funding for the track maintenance has also been supplied by IFOR and the final construction will be awarded to a civil contractor.

## **Humanitarian Affairs**

Members of the OHR departments of Human Rights/Rule of Law and Refugees and Humanitarian Issues

participated in the ECRE/ICVA Reference Group Meeting on 21-22 October (European Council on Refugees and Exiles and International Council of Voluntary Agencies). This conference discussed the situation of refugees and displaced persons, and the role of NGOs in supporting their voluntary repatriation.

The US Government has earmarked 5 million US\$ for a fund, managed by UNHCR, called the Bosnian Women's Initiative. This programme, the first of its kind in the world, is designed to promote the social and economic reintegration of those women who have been most affected by the events of the recent war. Business development loans and vocational training will promote the establishment of cooperatives and small businesses and help women to become financially independent. To date, the programme has approved funding for 15 projects throughout BH, including agricultural assistance, business training and support to workshops and factories.

## Economic Reconstruction

Under World Bank financing, 12 demining projects are underway in the regions of Bosanska Krupa, Gradacac, Tesanj, Glamoc and Sarajevo. The projects include demining of selected schools, bridges, roads and power lines to enable reconstruction and rehabilitation of these facilities.

In a joint project with the Fireman's Relief Aid, the Overseas Development Administration has funded a total of five fire engines and ten special ladders which will be given to the Sarajevo suburb stations of Ilijas, Ilidza, Vogosca, Hadzici and Grbavica.

## Media Issues

The independent organisation Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) wrote to the RS Member of the Presidency, Momcilo Krajisnik, on 15 October to express concern about difficulties faced by the Banja Luka-based independent newspapers *Novi Prelom* and *Nezavisne Novine* and the Doboj publication *Alternativa*, which has also had a law suit brought against it in relation to an article it published criticising a local RS official.

RSF said the local news company's decision to stop printing the papers because of technical considerations will effectively silence the three main independent papers in the RS and could be the result of disguised political pressures, as alleged by *Novi Prelom's* editorial board. All three cases were brought before the Media Experts Commission on 17 October and are being followed up by the OHR, other international organisations and local human rights groups.

## Looking Ahead

### **7 November:**

Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board Meeting, Brussels

### **14 November:**

PIC Steering Board Meeting at the Ministerial level, Paris.

### **4-5 December:**

Full Meeting of the Peace Implementation Council, London

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. 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 BH dial via Brussels switchboard: Tel. (32-2) 737 7500 & Fax (32-2) 737 7501*