

OHR Bulletin 11 - July 22, 1996

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Republica Srpska

Following intensive diplomatic activity involving the OHR, OSCE and the US, an agreement, brokered by Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, was reached in Belgrade on 18 July that Radovan Karadzic should relinquish the office of President of the Republika Srpska (RS) and all his residual powers and influence in the RS.

The agreement, in the form of a statement signed by Mr. Karadzic, Mr. Krajisnik, Mr. Buha and Madame Plavsic, confirmed an earlier agreement with the High Representative, Carl Bildt, and stipulated that as of 19 July, Dr. Biljana Plavsic assumed the office of Temporary Acting President of Republika Srpska until completion of the elections of 14 September 1996, when a new President will be elected.

Also in this statement, Dr. Karadzic stated that he would withdraw immediately and permanently from all political activities, not appear in public, or on radio or television, or participate in any way in the elections. As of 19 July, Karadzic also relinquished the office of the President of the SDS, and the functions, powers and responsibilities of this office shall be frozen until the SDS chooses a new President. Professor Buha will take over these responsibilities and powers in the interim.

The agreement was also signed by Serbian President Milosevic and Serbian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Milutinovic, as witnesses.

Speaking at a press conference in Sarajevo on 19 July, Ambassador Frowick said that *"the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina has taken a potentially major step forward"*. Ambassador Frowick added that the OSCE Mission in BH wants *"all political parties - including the SDS - to participate appropriately in the campaign"* and will continue to try and *"ensure integrity in the electoral process"*.

The Principal Deputy High Representative Michael Steiner stressed at the same press conference that the agreement needs to be *"strictly implemented in all its parts"* and that this step needs to be carefully evaluated.

Elections

The PEC adopted on 19 July an amendment to its Rules and Regulations stipulating that *"no person who is under indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and who has failed to comply with an order to appear before the Tribunal may stand as a candidate or hold any appointive, elective or other public office in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina."*

As long as any political party maintains such a person in a party position or function, that party shall be deemed ineligible to participate in the elections".

HR Report

The High Representative (HR), Carl Bildt, submitted his second report to the UN Security Council on 17 July. The report, which deals with developments in the peace implementation process during the period from the beginning of March 1996 to the end of June 1996, covers a number of crucial issues, including preparations for elections, economic reconstruction, freedom of movement, return of refugees and co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

In his overall assessment of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the HR said: *"After six months of peace implementation, the record is a mixed one. The progress in the daily lives of ordinary people is sometimes staggering, at the same time the political tensions that caused and drove the war are still very much in evidence. Peace as the continuation of war by other means is still dominating over peace as genuine reconciliation after the years of war."*

The HR reported that economic revival and long-term rebuilding of the economy remain major preconditions for peace and political stability. Priority tasks in this field include infrastructure revival, employment generation and restart of production as well as institution building and strengthening of implementation capabilities of government and its agencies.

On co-operation with the ICTY, the HR pointed out that *"none of the parties have so far co-operated fully in the handing over of persons indicted. Reports indicate that of those so far indicted, 50 are likely to be found on the territory of the RS, 15 on the territory of the Federation with some of them alternating with the Republic of Croatia and three on the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia."*

A disproportionately small number of refugees have so far exercised their right to return, the report states, and return is being obstructed by both political blockages as well as by acute lack of housing space. Another negative trend is that return has, so far, been nearly exclusively limited to areas of own ethnic dominance.

The HR also reports his *"serious concern with the fact that the Parties are not implementing their commitments in respect of human rights. Of particular concern is the pattern of either encouragement or tolerance of ethnic harassment. This causes the country to continue to drift apart in a development that is contrary to the declared aim of re-establishing a multi-ethnic society."*

Refugee And Humanitarian Affairs

The Expert Group on Exhumation and Missing Persons now has at its disposal a resident team of experts to monitor and supervise exhumations undertaken by local authorities. The purpose of such monitoring is to ensure that exhumations are conducted according to international standards.

Brussels

The fourth meeting of the Main Implementation Agencies (MIA) was held on 15 July at the OHR offices in Brussels. Agencies represented included: Council of Europe, ECMM, ICRC, ICTY, IOM, NATO, OSCE, UNHCR and the UN.

The participants reviewed the Peace Implementation Conference conclusions of the 14 June. NATO reported progress in most areas to do with cantonment and heavy weapons while some problems, of a political nature, continue to exist on the subject of delineation.

On the return of the population, the UNHCR indicated that a list of "priority target areas" for reconstruction had been produced but obstacles remain the absence of co-operation from the RS, with continued evictions, assaults and obstructions of bus services with "spontaneous demonstrations". Little progress was reported on the pilot projects. Similar obstructions were encountered and reported by the ICRC.

Other issues discussed included the Constitution, human rights, freedom of movement and exhumations.

Joint Bodies

The second session of the Joint Civilian Commission (JCC) South took place in Ljubinje, in the RS on 17 July, chaired by the Principal Deputy HR, Ambassador Michael Steiner. Representatives of municipalities from both Entities attended.

The return of refugees and displaced persons was discussed at length, with the RS side advocating a more cautious approach and the Bosniac representatives urging unimpeded return.

The participants were informed of the creation of the emergency fund which allows for financial aid to be allocated with minimal legal procedure to smaller projects with priority given to those of entity-binding character. The participants were asked to come up with specific and concrete ideas and projects addressing the needs and priorities of their regions.

The next JCC South is tentatively scheduled for 21 August.

Economic Assistance

The European Commission's Customs and Fiscal Assistance Office (CFAO) has helped the Federation raise over DM 90 million in customs revenue since April.

The CFAO was set up in March 1996 to train and establish an effective revenue-raising customs service for BH. Officers are mainly seconded from European customs services and the money raised so far has been put into a Federation bank account and is being used to fund public salaries as well as various agricultural & reconstruction projects. The CFAO is now establishing a second office in Banja Luka and will work towards creating a customs union of the two Entities, with one customs border.

The CFAO also incorporates the International Customs Observer Mission (ICOM), which is specifically charged with overseeing customs operations on the border, ensuring fairness of treatment to incoming persons and goods, and to ensure that all the collected revenue is deposited into the Federation account.

Media Development

At a meeting in the Brussels offices of the OHR on 19 July, funding was completed for Phase One of the Open Broadcast Network (OBN) project. This will enable TV-IN to start programming in time for the election campaign, and prepare the ground for consolidating the network after the elections in the long-term cause of media pluralism

in Bosnia.

The main donors to the \$10.8m project are the European Commission, the US and the Soros Foundation, followed by Germany, Sweden, Japan, the UK and the Netherlands. Ireland and Luxembourg have also contributed. The project managers are NTL (UK), and the Steering Group in Sarajevo will be co-ordinated by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) who have prepared the founding texts and guidelines in accordance with the highest professional standards.

The Brussels meeting followed a press conference in Sarajevo the previous week led by the stations constituting TV-IN: TV Hayat, Studio 99, Zetel of Zenica, TV Tuzla and RTV Mostar. Aidan White, General Secretary of the IFJ, also attended. The stations are now working intensively on plans for joint programming and election coverage. A group of journalists based in Banja Luka will participate in the network, emphasising the cross-entity nature of the project. The aim is to have the first common programmes ready at the end of this month.

The Free Elections Radio Network (FERN) began broadcasting its eight-week elections program on 15 July. The radio, formed by a ruling of the PEC on 22 April 1996, is a joint project of the OSCE Mission and the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs. Presenting the political parties taking part in the forthcoming elections, ensuring equitable access and time is the radio's main task in addition to informing the listeners about the continuing preparations for the elections, the voting mechanism and other technical details. The radio relies on a network of correspondents from throughout BH and covers a large part of the total population of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Looking Ahead

- **1 August:** JCC North
- **7 August:** JCC West, Banja Luka
- **13 August:** JCC (at national level), Sarajevo