

OHR Local News Issues, 6 May 1997

Dubrovnik – A two day informal session of the BiH Council of Ministers concluded its work today. Debating behind the closed doors, ministers reached agreement on three out of ten issues on the agenda. The first issue was the draft on the 1997 budget. However, talks on the budget expenditures will be continued at the BiH Presidency and then submitted to the Parliament. The drafts on the CoM and on the organization and structure of ministries have also been agreed upon, while a debate on restitution, privatization and ownership relations has been postponed for a later date. Deputy HR Michael Steiner commented on the session by saying that all disputable issues were laid down on the table and that this time the participants had been much more cooperative than on previous occasions. Co-chair in the CoM Haris Silajdzic underlined that the session was very constructive, while BiH Foreign Minister, Jadranko Prlic, opined that perhaps expectations about this session were too high but that nevertheless results were significant. Prlic added that tomorrow's session of the CoM in Lukavica would result in final adoption of the debated issues.

4'00"

FBiH House of Representatives – At its session today, the FBiH House of Representatives adopted Constitutional Amendments 25 and 26 without much delay. The two amendments regulate the organization of the cantons: Sarajevo, Herzegovina-Neretva and Central Bosnia. The cities of Mostar and Travnik are not designated as the cantonal capitals but "cantonal centres". The proposal to harmonize cantonal constitutions with the FBiH Constitution have also been endorsed.

However, the drafts on split municipalities and the formation of new municipalities has caused a heated debate. Croatian and Bosniak deputies confronted their views on this issue, particularly over the most disputed point – the Usora municipality. Croatian deputies advocated that the formation of the Usora municipality would protect the interests of local Croatian population, while Bosniak deputies protested against an ethnic principle in the formation of municipalities.

7'00"

Sarajevo – Member of the BiH Presidency, Kresimir Zubak, received the German Ambassador to BiH. The talks focused on the current situation in the FBiH and the process of establishing BiH state institutions.

1'00"

Sarajevo – The two topics prevailed at a press conference today: HR Carl Bildt's visit to Washington and the situation in Drvar. OHR Spokesman Colum Murphy was quoted to the fact that Bildt, during his stay, had raised questions of strategic significance for this region. One of most important question Bildt asked his American collocutors was whether it was necessary to concentrate NATO troops in Germany, instead of moving them partially to the area of Southern Europe. Murphy underlined that Bildt's talks in the USA were not aimed at undertaking concrete actions in BiH, but inciting strategic thinking of the Western allies about this part of Europe.

Upon OSCE insistence, and because of 25 Serb houses set ablaze, the Mayor of Drvar has apologized publicly to Mile Marceta, leader of Bosnian Serbs who fled Drvar after a Croatian offensive in 1995, stated OSCE spokesman David Foley.

UN Spokesman Alex Ivanko informed that the Croatian police in Drvar had become more cooperative, forwarding documentation and allowing access to IPTF when requested.

6'00"

Mostar – Sir Martin Garrod, Head of the OHR Regional Office told the press that this is the most peaceful period in Mostar since I have assumed office.

Summary SRT News

Dubrovnik – The CoM continued discussion on the QSP Laws the adoption of which conditions the holding of the Donors' Conference and provides \$ 1,4 billion to the RS and Federation. During two

days of talks, the CoM mainly discussed the Law on the CoM and organisation structure of ministries; they also discussed the Foreign Debt law, Budget Law, Citizenship Law and passport issue, as well as the privatisation and holders' relations. The CoM should also adopt key laws with regard to the economy which would be formally signed at the CoM session to be held tomorrow in Lukavica. Representatives of the WB and IMF, as well as Ambassador Steiner also attended the Dubrovnik meeting.

2:00

SFOR – to leave or not to leave:

HR Bildt said that he is in favour of the extension of the NATO mission in BiH in order to preserve the peace which is also SFOR's obligation. SFOR presence would be needful even after July 1998.

UNHCR is also in favour of the extension of NATO mandate, primarily because of difficulties regarding the process of refugee return.

LA Times reports that the Republicans strong wing at the US Congress is preparing a debate on withdrawal of US troops from BiH by September 30, this year, otherwise they will not be financially supported. Those in favour of this idea say that troops have been in BiH far too long, they completed their task regarding the military aspect of the DPA, whereas the civil aspects have not moved from their starting point. The Republicans are aware that the idea will not bear fruits, nevertheless, they intend to put pressure on the US President to withdraw troops by July next year.

The German paper Frankfurter Rundschau reported that Muslims have been preparing their army for an attack on the RS for the purpose of establishing their own Muslim, Islamic state, larger than now – from the coast of Neum to the river Sava near Brcko.

The international community will not allow Croats to exercise another exodus of Serbs from Srem-Baranja region, Jacques Klein, the international head of the Region, said. He thinks that Belgrade and Zagreb could agree on dual citizenship which would result in a cooling off of tensions in the future.

5:00

The process of registration of voters is proceeding successfully in the RS and FRY. SRT appeals on voters to register themselves in order to vote at the local elections to be held in September this year.

2:00

Prior to Djurdjevdan, a religious holiday of the SRT, Krajisnik said that the TV has supported and preserved the Serb identity and established the Serb state. SRT workers reminded their viewers on the first day they started broadcasting 'the bare truth about the civil war, and breaking through the tenacious media blockade'. They paid tribute to those who laid down their lives for the interest of the Serb state and a better future. 'Some of the international community representatives want to create and implement their own DPA, and establish a special state in which we would literally lose our own identity which we have been fighting for,' Krajisnik said, adding the RS must establish strong relations with the Motherland Serbia and Montenegro, as a basis for establishment of further relations with other countries.

4:00

Banja Luka – A French Economic delegation headed by the director of the French Chamber of Commerce, finished their three day visit to the RS. The French and RS delegations talked about financial help to the RS.

2:00