

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

EUSR, Eldar Subasic

OSCE, Mersiha Causevic-Podzic

EUFOR, Nicholas Foster

EUSR

Police talks

OHR/EUSR will be attending the informal talks on police reform, which are being held today at the request of the BiH political parties at the residence of the German Ambassador in Sarajevo.

OHR/EUSR welcomes the interest of leaders to continue talks and we stand ready to assist. However, the international community is also looking for results.

Yesterday, EU Foreign Ministers urged the new authorities to use the current momentum to bring forward police reform.

Last week, the PIC Steering Board in Brussels also made clear that the IC expects the State and Entity governments to reach agreement on the Police Directorate Report together with the proposed *Agreement on Implementation and Timelines* before mid-March.

Delay in reaching agreement beyond mid-March could result in significant delays in the signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement. OHR/EUSR therefore hopes that talks will continue later this week in order to achieve results in advance of the visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina of EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn on 16 March.

OHR/EUSR will remain engaged in the process of police reform, as tasked by the PIC and the European Union.

Water, Water Everywhere

I would also like to draw your attention to a competition that took place at the end of last month in Berkley Springs, West Virginia, where more than 100 different brands of water from 23 US states and 11 countries were judged in various categories at a tasting competition.

The judges found that four out of the five top sparkling waters were from Bosnia and Herzegovina. I have the original media report if any of you are interested in finding out which water companies here were cited.

This story is worth mentioning because it points up the fact that companies here are able to meet the highest international standards of production and quality. What these companies need to create more jobs and help raise living standards is a better business environment.

Two weeks ago when he spoke at the FIPA awards for top international investors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling stressed that the level of foreign investment here is a trickle, a fraction of what it could be. To turn this trickle into a flood the authorities must enact legislation – for which there is already broad political consensus – that will make it easier for companies here to compete.

Until and unless key reforms are enacted, money for the expansion of business and jobs will go to Bosnia and Herzegovina's neighbours instead of to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and competitive companies here will have an uphill task in their efforts to take this country's products to world markets.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative will be raising a glass of BiH sparkling water tonight to

toast this success.

OSCE

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina would like to congratulate Mr. Mile Kudic on his election to the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to wish him success in his work. The Mission would also like to thank and commend Ms. Lidija Korac for her outstanding work and her invaluable contribution to the success of the Elections Commission to date. Ms. Korac's work has been indispensable in securing the integrity of the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in establishing the respect it enjoys today. We wish her continued success in her future engagements.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina intends fully to respect all the decisions taken by the members of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, however, it feels compelled to express certain concerns over the procedures currently employed by the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina to select members of the Central Election Commission.

At present, an *ad hoc* Committee for Selection ranks proposed candidates according to their experience, education, qualifications, and years of service. The Committee does this, presumably, in order to enable the Parliamentary Assembly to select the most suitable candidate for the vacant position. The voting procedure currently in place does not; however, appear to take the Committee's rankings of the candidates sufficiently into consideration. This appears to mean in practice, then, that the professional qualifications of the candidates, which should in the Mission's view be the prime means by which to judge their suitability for the job of Elections Commissioner, become of only secondary importance to the outcome of the vote.

The Dayton Agreement awarded to the OSCE the task of adopting and putting in place an elections program for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is for this reason that the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina wishes to express the opinion that the Parliamentary Assembly should in the future focus principally on the professionalism and electoral experience of the people it selects for membership on the Central Elections Commission. In the long run this is the only way to maintain the independence and professionalism of this body, which has been so carefully and painstakingly built up over the past decade.

EUFOR

Yesterday the EU Council for General Affairs and External Relations noted that the reconfiguration of EUFOR would now go ahead. As part of its overall engagement in BiH, the EU will retain a military presence in the country in order to continue contributing to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment.

Under the transition plan for Operation Althea the EU will reduce the size of EUFOR, however the reconfiguration will occur progressively and maintain the capacity to reverse the effects of the force reduction and to re-establish a more robust military presence if needed.

2500 troops will form a Multinational Manoeuvre Battalion and Integrated Police Unit based in Sarajevo and in addition EUFOR will retain its presence throughout the country through the Liaison and Observation Teams (LOTs). Robust reserve forces will be available over the horizon ready to respond throughout the country and to provide reassurance.

EUFOR will continue to fulfill its peace-enforcement mandate and provide support to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) including the detention of persons indicted for war crimes, whilst noting that the responsibility for full cooperation with ICTY rests with the BiH authorities.

RTQ:

BHTV, Milica Vučetić:

A question for Mr. Subašić concerning the talks on police reform. Everyone is saying that these talks are in fact just informal talks, and then it was uncertain whether they would be held at the embassy or the Ambassadors

residency, although the talks are closed to the media. In general, what can be expected from today's talks? Will any progress be made towards reaching a final agreement or will this just be another social gathering of B-H politicians?

OHR/EUSR, Eldar Subašić:

Well, as you know, the organizer of this meeting is the German Ambassador and he has invited us to attend these talks. We were informed that the talks are of an informal nature and that the aim of these talks will be to attempt to reach some sort of a consensus or to make some progress toward reconciling the diverging standpoints on this matter. Therefore, if you have any inquiries regarding the results or the course of these talks you will need to direct your questions to the German Ambassador because, after all, these talks today are being held on the initiative of the German Embassy. Nevertheless, the OHR and USAID will still be involved in all talks of a more formal character.

BHTV, Milica Vučetić:

You are probably familiar with the initiative started by Bosniacs from Srebrenica, who are threatening to move out of the town if their demands are not met. It seems that they are adamant in their stands and demands. What is the view on this issue?

OHR/EUSR, Eldar Subašić:

We have also received the declaration that was sent out yesterday to the local authorities and the international institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are currently reviewing the letter and are not able to make any comments at this time as we have only just received it.