

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

Police Reform, like Functioning SBS, Means Greater Security for Citizens

This afternoon the High Representative will attend a ceremony marking today, June 6, as SBS Day.

The mission of the SBS – which is to secure BiH's borders and make sure that citizens have complete freedom of movement – is a challenging one, and the fact that it has become an effective organisation capable of fulfilling this mission is something that should reassure citizens.

The SBS is an autonomous governmental organization with a clear command and control system and with the resources that are necessary to patrol BiH's borders. Reaching this stage, as you know, required a huge amount of – often acrimonious – political debate. Then, as with police reform now, there were arguments, particularly from the RS, that despite the obvious benefits to citizens of creating an efficient organisation to protect their interests, the strategy of solving a state-level problem with a state-level solution represented some kind of weakening of Entity integrity.

But BiH's State Border Service is now seen in a *positive* context. It works. It serves citizens. It is tackling the scourge of criminal networks that engage in trafficking, smuggling, money laundering, tax evasion and other crimes. And, the RS has not been undermined, as many politicians once claimed it would be.

Thanks to the SBS, and other agencies such as SIPA, thanks to a fully computerised system of control and issuance of visas to foreign citizens, thanks to key reforms in the judicial sector, and the introduction of secure personnel documentation it is now possible to lobby the EU for a facilitation of visa requirements, so that it will become easier for BiH citizens to travel in Europe – something which, as you know, the High Representative has been doing, and continues to do, in a very vigorous way.

The result has been that the EU has agreed to treat BiH in the first wave of States from the region to come up for consideration for visa liberalization.

The EU's sensitivity about visas is simple: they want to ensure that BiH can effectively secure its own borders and fight crime across its entire territory before they will consider dropping their own safeguards.

In order to win visa facilitation, the BiH authorities must demonstrate that they are serious about security.

Which brings me to Police Reform. If ever a reform had clear benefits it is surely this one. It will reinforce BiH's ability to fight crime; this will have an obvious and very large positive impact on everyday life in this country; it will also send a positive signal about the intentions and the determination of the authorities.

That is why the decision by RS representatives in the Police Directorate to withdraw their active participation is so disappointing. This reform will help fight crime and help bring about visa facilitation – and attempt to sideline it for the sake of perceived political advantage is simply irresponsible.

Regional Development Agencies Need Better Cooperation from Authorities

The High Representative and the Head of the European Commission's Delegation, Michael Humphreys, will take part at a roundtable in Sarajevo tomorrow with the directors of BiH's Regional Development Agencies. The roundtable will be chaired by Principal Deputy High Representative Larry Butler.

The five RDAs have each drawn up development strategies highlighting the particular strengths and economic possibilities of their own regions, and each is actively engaged in business development and investment promotion. While they have enjoyed some success, much still has to be done in order to transform regional development into job creation, as has happened in other Transition economies. The focus of tomorrow's discussion will be on the experience of the RDAs – what has worked and what has not worked – and the needs of the RDAs, particularly with a view to getting better cooperation and working more productively with the various levels of government.

We will issue a media advisory later today.

High Representative to Remind Politicians of Job Creation Priority

The High Representative will also be speaking tomorrow at the assembly of the BiH Foreign Trade Chamber. Among other things he will point out that BiH is enjoying strong export growth *despite* the slow pace of progress in improving the business environment, *despite* inadequate administrative support for exporters and *despite* a physical and transport infrastructure desperately in need of upgrade. He will highlight the fact that the economy is growing at a steady and substantial rate and so are exports – so imagine what could be achieved, in terms of creating jobs and raising living standards, if the political authorities were to listen to the people who run businesses and start enacting and implementing economic reforms with visible urgency and commitment.

Among the reforms which the High Representative will allude to are the Law on National Fiscal Council, the Law on Obligations, the Salary law, the Pharmaceuticals Law and the centralisation of banking supervision, all of which could be set in place by the end of the summer. This will be done if politicians care as much about job creation as their constituents do.

OSCE

The Media - Key to Democratic and Transparent Elections

In light of the upcoming general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to BiH, is hosting a two-day workshop for more than 30 journalists across the country and Public Relations Officers from public institutions. These journalists report regularly from BiH State and Entity Parliaments.

In democratic societies, no elections can be run without the media. The media represents an essential element as it provides information about parties and candidates and about the election process itself.

Representatives of the BiH Central Election Commission, Communications Regulatory Agency and the Press Council will present the Election Law and new amendments related to the Press Code. They will also emphasize the importance of cooperation between the journalists reporting from different levels of government.

Mr. Jan George Frajkor, professor from the School of Journalism, Carleton University in Canada, will also address the participants and share his experiences on the Canadian and Slovak elections and on press galleries operating within the Parliaments.

EUFOR

The Chairmanship of the EUFOR co-ordination meeting for the disposal of surplus small arms and ammunition has been transferred to the BiH MOD. The first meeting under the BiH MOD chair will be held today 6 June 2006.