



Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR:

RS Government Reject Legal Guarantees

Having reviewed the RS Government's conclusions of 29 October the OHR notes that once again not a single argument or fact to show that the High Representative's decision to amend the Law on the Council of Ministers violates the interests of the Serbs has been offered.

Accordingly, the OHR's position that there is no need to withdraw or amend the High Representative's decision, therefore, remains unchanged.

The High Representative's Decision is fully in line with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and does not undermine in any manner the position of any Entity or constituent peoples.

Despite a generally positive meeting of legal experts last Saturday, the OHR regrets that the RS Government did not accept the OHR's offer to define the OHR legal interpretation as an authentic legal interpretation. An "authentic legal interpretation" is a legally recognized classification that would address the concerns expressed by the Serbs.

The OHR has provided plenty of opportunities for a solution to be found and we have no reason to believe that the RS political leadership has a genuine desire to find a solution.

Anything else means provoking an artificial political crisis which may lead to violating the Dayton and challenging the International Community.

In this context, I would like to add a comment to the Declaration signed in Mostar. As we have said already, this is a positive step, but we expect next steps to be made soon – i.e. drafting and adopting the law.

It is not possible to think about a European future in a situation when threats are made that the Dayton, the Constitution and laws of this country will not be complied with.

The RSNA is to continue its session today but as we understand the RS Government has advised the Assembly not to issue any conclusions until after the PIC which brings us to the second point I have for you today.

Two-day PIC session in Sarajevo Begins Today

The Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) will gather in Sarajevo at the level of political directors today and tomorrow. This is an appropriate moment for the PIC to meet and to seriously discuss the deteriorating political situation in the country.

During its discussions the PIC will consider the progress the parties in BiH are making towards implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement, in particular the functionality of the joint institutions at the State level, the lack of progress in specific areas, including the distribution of State property as well as more positive indicators that BiH's coalition leaders are making efforts to find agreement. They will also discuss the country's EU perspective, currently blocked, but for which a glimmer of hope emerged in Mostar on Sunday.

We expect the Political Directors to have a serious discussion about the situation in BiH. The PIC will meet with the leaders of the political parties that form the governing coalition at the state level and with the Council of Ministers.

EUFOR:

COM EUFOR MEETING WITH BiH MINISTER OF SECURITY

Yesterday afternoon at Camp Butmir, COM EUFOR, Rear Admiral Hans Jochen Witthauer met with the BiH Minister of Security and Deputy Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Tarik Sadović to discuss the current political and security situation in BiH and the necessity for all sides in BiH to respect the Dayton Peace Accords. Both agreed that, despite the current political crisis, the Safe and Secure Environment is not jeopardised. Issues surrounding the current EUFOR mandate on the movement control of weapons and ammunition were also discussed. COM EUFOR highlighted that the "current control functions in place are vital for ensuring a safe and secure environment. EUFOR wants to hand over this function to a central authority in BiH and support from all political parties is sought to pass the necessary legislation".

EUFOR's stance on the uncontrolled presence of armaments and ammunition is that this still represents a serious problem in BiH. Peace implementation on the basis of the Dayton Peace Accords requires a central authority, currently EUFOR, to oversee the movements of all civilian held weapons and ammunition within BiH. Cooperation between the BiH authorities and EUFOR has seen some significant output last week when EUFOR found a significant illegal weapon cache and then handed it over to local police authorities.

COM EUFOR again stated that "local ownership remains the guiding principle. My goal is to ensure a controlled handover of EUFOR's functions to the relevant BiH authorities".

RTQs:

Večernje Novosti, Dušan Stojaković:

I would like to know how the OHR is prepared to and will respond in the event that the RS Government, that is the

institutions of Republika Srpska reject Mr. Lajčak's measures and if the SNSD (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats) or the representatives of Republika Srpska withdraw from all structures of executive authority in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

OHR/EUSR, Frane Maroević:

We are prepared for any situation. However, as you well know, we never speculate on future actions we might take.

Oslobođenje, Antonio Prlenda:

What do you expect from tomorrow's PIC session, that is the meeting with the leaders of the political parties that form the governing coalition? Will there be a brief type of 'pre-communique' or some similar statement for the public before the PIC session? What do you expect in general?

OHR/EUSR, Frane Maroević:

No. In principle and as always the results of the PIC session will be presented after the end of the session. There will be nothing before the session concludes. However, as I already said, we expect a very serious discussion to be held both by the Political Directors, that is the Peace Implementation Council itself, and with the political party leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

RTRS, Škipina:

In the frame of the discussion will the High Representative's Bonn powers, which he used in order to pass his latest measures, be discussed as an individual topic or will this matter be discussed as part of all the other topics of discussion?

OHR/EUSR, Frane Maroević:

The Bonn powers are very clear. The Dayton Peace agreement is very clear. There is no need for any discussion on that matter.

Večernje Novosti, Dušan Stojaković:

One more question. I apologize if I am monopolizing this press conference. What is the possibility of Bosnia and Herzegovina signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement on the basis of the Declaration signed in Mostar?

OHR/EUSR, Frane Maroević:

First of all, the European Commission needs to assess the Declaration. However, I think that everyone commends the Declaration and perceive it as a very good initiative for starting the process and it is now crucial for further acts to be drafted, legal acts that will confirm this. The European Union has always made it clear that what they want is to see progress being made on this entire process. A declaration has been signed and now we expect legal acts to be drafted as quickly as possible in order for Bosnia and Herzegovina to move forward on the road to Europe.

SAN, Amela Žigo:

I would like to know something else since we received contradicting information yesterday in relation to Dragomir Andan's personal identification card being returned to him. Has the OHR verified whether the RS Ministry of Internal Affairs indeed returned Mr. Andan his personal identification card, especially considering that Mr. Andan's attorney, Mr. Emir Karača, yesterday confirmed that this was true?

OHR/EUSR, Frane Maroević:

We are not aware of any such decision being taken by the Constitutional Court. We also learned from media reports yesterday that the RS Police Director publicly stated that his personal identification card had not been returned to him. The RS Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for such matters. Therefore you can contact them in relation to this question, although they have already made a clear statement on this issue.

Thank you.