Statement by Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the High Representative for BiH at the Post-PIC Press Conference

First of all, thank you all for coming. As you can see, we have just completed another frank and fruitful meeting. I have called you here immediately after the meeting to give you a clear idea of what has been discussed in this room.

The PIC noted that the reform process came to a standstill before the elections – and found this to be unacceptable. The reform process must be restarted – not next month, not in January, but now.

The PIC specifically called on the relevant stakeholders to make progress on police restructuring and constitutional reform in the coming weeks without waiting for the formation of governments.

As you can see, we have not been dealing in statements of grand principle. This has been a working meeting and now we want to see practical and speedy political developments.

To this end, the Steering Board expects the institutions of Republika Srpska to resume full and active participation in the work of the Police Directorate and to engage in the process laid out in the October 2005 Agreement on Restructuring of Police Structures.

The Steering Board expects the Directorate to submit its report by the end of November and notes that constructive dialogue on police reform would facilitate the Directorate’s work and subsequent adoption of its proposal.

The Steering Board also urged early adoption of the package of constitutional amendments agreed by six political parties in March.

Regardless of which parties enter government, the obligations that must be met and the reforms that must be delivered remain the same.

The Steering Board has made it expected the new political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to get down to work and do the things that they have committed themselves to.

The election campaign and now the formation of governments have diverted attention from the reform agenda. But the work of government can’t come to a standstill.

For example, unless the State and Entity governments complete preparations for the 2007 budgets and agree on a new way of dividing up ITA revenue, the governments won’t be able to pay their bills next year.

The amendments to the State-level Law on Frozen Foreign Currency Savings cannot be funded, and would damage the interests of the entire population as well as the interests of deposit holders.

Likewise, the Federation Law on Demobilised Defenders would make it impossible to continue paying for normal public services.

These laws must be repealed for the sake of the economic stability of this country.

Otherwise, I would like to draw your attention to our discussion on Mostar.

The Steering Board offered its full support to Norbert Winterstein, whom I appointed last month as my Special Representative to Mostar, in his efforts to mediate, or, if requested, to arbitrate to find solutions to unify the City’s

administration. If, however, the solutions he proposes are not implemented and he refers them back to me, the Steering Board has authorised me to take decisive action, which I will not hesitate to do.

In Mostar and elsewhere, there is clearly a huge amount of work ahead. It's time to return to the reform agenda and get working.

RTQ:

Branka Kusmuk, RTRS:

Mr. Schilling, if it is not a problem, I would like to ask a question concerning police reform. You said that the restructuring of police structures must be continued, that the Steering Board emphasized that progress must be made on police restructuring and that the government of Republika Srpska must take participate in this. Would you please decisively tell us wether the three EU principles necessitate the abolishment of the entity Ministries of Interior and if they involve the crossing of entity borders? If you could please give us a decisive answer. Also, what is the position of the Steering Board on this issue?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the High Representative and EUSR for BiH:

Well we did not need to have a detailed discussion about that in the PIC because there was no intention in the negotiations and talks in the Directorate to have to go on, to cross over the border-line where it is not necessary. As far as I know that is only in the Sarajevo area, because there the police must have a bigger possibility, to have a bigger region. I have never heard about other cross overs, and I never heard anything about the Directorate having any discussion about the abolishment of the Ministries of Interior. I think both of

those are not in the content of the report – anywhere. So, I cannot say anything more. Anybody active in these talks and discussions would know what is really spoken and what the proposals are.

I never heard of those propsals: that there is a goal of crossing the border-lines (as one goal), and that the second goal is the abolishment of the Ministries of Interior. I never heard anything about that.

Journalist #2, RTRS:

Good afternoon Mr. Schilling. I am a colleague of Branke Kusmuk at RTRS, and I would just like to reiterate her question – will it be necessary to abolish the Ministry of Interior of Republika Srpska and the Ministry of Interior of the Federation of BiH?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the High Representative and EUSR for BiH:

This is in no way a topic of Police Reform, and so it is not a topic in the Directorate. And also, I have never heard that some of the Bosnian politicians want to have a political discussion about the abolishment of the Ministries of Interior.

No, I already said and meant that. I already said that it was not necessary to go into the details of what you are asking here. So, it was not a topic of the PIC.

Blažica Krišto, FTV:

My question is not realted to these two-day meetings, however it does concern the Commission for finding, that is for investigating the fate of Mr. Avdo Palić, a colonel of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina . The OHR is well acquainted with this case. Today is the six-month anniversary of the end of the mandate of the Commission which

was founded to investigate the fate of Colonel Avdo Palić. What is the OHR's position on this issue and has the OHR taken any more action with regards to this case?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the High Representative and EUSR for BiH:

I think you can see how seriously we take that case as it was a topic of discussion at the PIC conference. I am concerned by the failings of the RS Government in this case. The Government gave assurances that Palić's remains would be uncovered and that the people responsible would be brought to justice. Besides some small information, there has been no progress on both these points. And I wanted to ensure that the PIC made a clear statement on both these things and the ICTY issue. They followed my recommendations, and it is very clearly stated in the conclusion of the PIC meeting, as you can see.

Branka Kusmuk, RTRS:

I sincerely apologize to my colleagues, however I would like to ask Mr.Schilling one more question, this time on the topic of constitutional reform. You said that the package needs to be adopted as soon as possible. These constitutional reforms includes the entity voting system, and several political parties in the Federation of BiH have made their position on this issue very clear – and that is that they will not agree to any talks unless entity voting is eliminated. Therefore, could you please tell us how this difference in opinion can be overcome and what is the possible solution to this problem?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the High Representative and EUSR for BiH:

The question of entity voting is not in the content of the first package. The clear consequence is that all discussions about that would be in a later process, in connection with other reforms of the constitution. So there is no change or

proposal of change in the question of entity voting in the first package – in what is proposed to be done in the first stage, as soon as possible, by the political leaders.