Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

System Now in Place to Complete Work of Identifying Missing Persons

More than 14,000 families inBosnia and Herzegovina are still waiting to receive information regarding the whereabouts of loved ones who disappeared during the war. As the Senior Deputy High Representative, Martin Ney, will observe at an event later today, "this figure testifies to the failure of the respective authorities to fulfill their binding commitment under Dayton."

Ambassador Ney will chair today's session of the Working Group on Missing Persons, established by International Committee of Red Cross to obtain, collate and communicate information on missing persons from the Entity and Brcko authorities.

Annex VII of the Dayton Agreement obliges the relevant authorities to provide this information.

Ambassador Ney will also emphasise that BiH now has the legislative framework and the necessary domestic institutions to deal effectively with the issue of missing persons. The Law on Missing Persons was adopted last year, and the Missing Persons Institute has been established and is expected to be

operational by next year.

Flouting of Audit Reports Endangers BiH Transition Process

I would also draw your attention to remarks made at a conference in Sarajevo yesterday by Patrice Dreiski, head of the OHR's Economics Department

Mr Dreiski pointed out that while the State and Entity Auditors have started to make a positive impact on the way public money is handled in BiH and the way public companies are run, this impact has not been nearly large enough.

"No matter how outrageous the findings – theft, incompetence, mismanagement – the popular indignation that now customarily follows the publication of audit reports appears to last only for a matter of days," he said "But after the indignation has died down, the politicians, directors of assorted boards and other insiders go back to business as usual."

Mr Dreiski said that the failure of the audits, till now, to sustain popular indignation and improve the management of government departments and public companies "represents a real danger for BiH's economic transition as a whole."

He pointed out that "until now the number of criminal prosecutions arising from audit findings has been disproportionately small," and highlighted the fact that it is the role of the Public Prosecutor "to take up – when criminal activity has been exposed – where the auditors leave off."

OSCE

OSCE Mission to BiH supports study visit to Slovenia for parliamentary research

As part of the OSCE Mission to BiH assistance in the

development of the parliamentary research capacity of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, a study visit of junior members of the BiH Parliamentary Research Centre of the Slovenian National Assembly has been organized from 20 to 23 November 2005 .

The training programme, prepared in co-operation with the Slovenian National Assembly Research and Documentation Sector, focuses on the specific requirements of parliamentary research and modern research techniques. The programme is built on existing co-operation and the exchange of knowledge and between the BiH PA and Slovenian National Assembly.

The OSCE Mission to BiH will continue to encourage and support this cooperation in the future as far as Slovenian experience and knowledge is highly relevant to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly in consideration of the country's aspiration to join the European Union.

EUPM

No statement.

EUFOR

Council conclusions on Western Balkans

At the 2690th General Affairs Council meeting, held in Brussels yesterday, the Council of the European Union reviewed the EU Military Operation in Bosnia-Hercegovina, Operation ALTHEA, on completion of its successful first year.

'The Council welcomed the positive contribution of the operation to ensuring a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina , and confirmed that a continuing EU military presence remained at this stage essential to that end. It noted that the operation was a practical example of the

strategic partnership with NATO in crisis management. It approved the SG/HR's recommendation that force levels should remain broadly unchanged for the coming year and that decisions on the future size and structure of EUFOR should be based on an assessment of conditions on the ground. The Council furthermore confirmed that EUFOR should retain its tasks

for the coming six months. Sustained progress within the Stabilisation and Association process, and an assessment of the impact of elections in 2006 will allow Ministers then to consider options for the future presence of EUFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina.'