

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

Must See Progress At Hutovo Blato

It is important that today's talks among the leaders of the BiH and Entity Institutions in Hutovo Blato show progress. The public is right to demand progress on a reform that is central to BiH's European future.

The conditions for EU membership are non-negotiable, and until BiH's politicians are prepared to make reforms which meet these conditions BiH's path to Europe will remain blocked.

BiH's government leaders must face up to the tough decisions required to take this country forward. If BiH misses the opportunity this year, it will likely enter into an election year without having reached an agreement on police reform and so will not be in a position to meet the conditions to open SAA negotiations. The tough political decisions will just get tougher, and BiH would likely fall further and further behind its neighbours, some of whom are already reaping the benefits of investment, job creation and the softening of visa requirements.

The participants have much work ahead but the OHR believes

that agreement in certain specific areas, for example on a transitional implementation timeline, the final location of the Police Administration Authority and the SIPA HQ, training centres and uniforms is within reach.

OHR encourages the participants to continue negotiations as long as there is a possibility of agreement being reached in these and other areas.

In Brussels on 14 June the High Representative and CoM Chair Terzic agreed with the EC's Commissioner for Expansion, Olli Rehn, on the joint ambition of bringing BiH to a position where it can launch Stabilisation and Association negotiations in time for the tenth Anniversary of Dayton.

If the representatives of the institutions succeed in agreeing a proposal it will have to be endorsed by the entity Parliaments, by mid September.

When a political agreement that meets all three EU principles is reached, both Entity parliaments must endorse the agreement before the OHR could recommend to the EC that this last major condition for the completion of the Feasibility Study has been met.

OSCE

OSCE and Reuters Foundation host three-day journalism writing course

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Reuters Foundation from UK, are hosting a three-day practical journalism writing course "Professional Reporting on Education".

The course will take place in Mostar from 24 to 26 August, 2005 at the OSCE Mission to BiH Regional Centre Mostar, conducted by veteran Reuters reporters, Hugh Pain and Duncan

Shiels. Hugh Pain was bureau chief in Sarajevo during the early 1990s. Duncan Shiels is currently bureau chief in Budapest, Hungary.

The program will offer unique presentations, discussions and practical writing exercises on the important topic of education and reform including a possible site-visit to one of the areas ethnically divided schools. Each training day stories will be assigned followed by detailed copy editing and critiquing.

The Reuters motto is "Learning by Doing" and so the training rooms have been turned into a live newsroom where participants can expect on-going and daily reporting and writing assignments.

Participants from all regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina will attend the course.

ICMP

Next Tuesday, August 30th, the BiH Council of Ministers and the International Commission on Missing Persons will together launch the Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Missing Persons Institute, or MPI, will become the State-level BiH institution that will be responsible for addressing the missing persons issue in this country.

The current Federation Commission for Tracing Missing Persons and the RS Office for Tracing Detained and Missing Persons will be merged into the MPI, will take over the responsibilities, work, staff and budgets of the current entity bodies.

This will mean that the investigations, exhumations and identifications of the thousands of missing persons in Bosnia-Herzegovina will be addressed at the State level. The MPI will

search for missing citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, regardless of their ethnic, national or religious background. By creating a sustainable, state-level structure, Bosnia-Herzegovina is taking an important step forward in addressing the issue of the missing.

The MPI will collect, process and organize information on missing persons, individual and mass graves. It will establish a central and unique database on missing persons to keep records and notify families of missing persons. This central database will help address the concerns of families of the missing and their communities about the actual numbers of missing persons and where they went missing.

The MPI will find and exhume graves, take part in the collection of surface remains and participate in autopsies, anthropological examinations and identifications. It will cooperate with relevant authorities, including judicial bodies and other organisations and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). It will also store remains until handover of the bodies to family members or burial and it will provide support to families of the missing and their associations. In short, the Institute will have all the responsibilities currently held by the relevant entity bodies, and more. The ICMP will assist in all aspects of the work of the MPI, as it currently assists the two entity missing persons authorities.

On a practical level, for example, we foresee that by the beginning of next year, exhumations that would have been the responsibility of the relevant entity bodies will start to be replaced by the Missing Persons Institute.

The Missing Persons Institute was originally established in the year 2000 and ICMP has worked over the years to help to build the political will amongst all sides and of the stakeholders in the missing persons issue to create this State-level institution.

Next Tuesday morning, there will be a ceremony at the Joint Institutions Building , during which Minister of Human Rights Mirsad Kebo, on behalf of the Council of Ministers, and ICMP Chief of Staff Kathryne Bomberger will sign an agreement that will establish the Council of Ministers as a co-founder of the State-level Missing Persons Institute, along with ICMP.

There will be a media advisory nearer the time with more details about the signing ceremony at the Joint Institutions Building .

EUFOR

No statement.

NATO

No statement.

RTQs:

BH Radio:

Oleg, one question: Yesterday the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council announced that during the previous month three judges and four prosecutors handed in their resignations. Does the OHR have any comments on that issue?

OHR:

In any case that is a question for the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council which is, as you well know, not a part of the OHR but an independent body responsible for monitoring the work of judges and prosecutors.

Reuters, Nedim Dervisbegovic:

There's been another report, this time on the internet, about alleged terrorist activities in Bosnia . Just for the record can you tell us do you have any information about al-Qaeda or any other terrorist group organization or individuals basically being active in Bosnia ? Thank you.

Major Dwight Mood – NATO:

That's a good question and we obviously look at every report very seriously, as you know that's one of our major tasks at NATO – terrorism activities. No we have no more information about this particular episode.

Mirela Ćosić, BH TV:

Yesterday it was announced that from the beginning of next year the OHR in Tuzla will be closed down and people will be left without a job. In the context of this transition, that is the announced transition, is there possibly any other information in relation to whether other offices of the High Representative will be closed down?

OHR:

At the moment these are still only plans. In any case the international community and especially the OHR, which is only a temporary institution, must plan ahead. As Bosnia and Herzegovina makes progress towards joining the European Union, the OHR must be prepared for that. However, as I have already said, at the moment those are just plans. This week the High Representative is conducting fieldwork in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is talking directly with the people. Following this, namely after receiving approval from the Peace Implementation Council, since ultimately the proposal is subject to approval from the PIC, we will be able to provide specific details. At this moment I wouldn't like to say anything more about specific details.

Reuters, Nedim Dervisbegovic:

Perhaps I wasn't clear enough. Apart from this report do you have any information about terrorist activities in Bosnia in the last couple of years?

Major Dwight Mood – NATO:

We have no further information, but I would like to say that it's interesting timing because obviously the major focus for Bosnia now is police reform and we don't want to do anything to derail from those talks. Thank you.

IWPR, Hugh Griffiths:

A question for Dwight Mood: General Schook has been quoted in the local media over the last couple of days as being optimistic regarding the capture of Radovan Karadžić and General Mladić. Could you tell us anything more about where those comments come from?

Major Dwight Mood – NATO:

It has been very evident that the international community has stepped up the pressure in the last year and General Schook has stated repeatedly he's been very optimistic. If you look at the last couple of weeks with the arrest in Argentina , with the arrest of Milan Lukić, we can see that the international community now is taking strides along with Serbia to arrest and detain major ICTY PIFWICs.