OHR’s Statement at the International Agencies’ Joint Press Conference in Banja Luka

The OHR welcomes the transfer of Vinko Pandurevic to The ICTY

The OHR welcomes the transfer of Vinko Pandurevic to The ICTY today. Mr Pandurevic stands accused of the gravest crimes against humanity, including genocide, complicity to commit genocide and extermination.

His transfer to The Hague, in which the RS authorities played an important role, is a significant breakthrough. He is the fifth indicted war criminal to be transferred to the ICTY this year by the Republika Srpska, after nine years of inactivity and obstruction in relation to the ICTY.

Mr Pandurevic is one of the last remaining members of the VRS Military Command charged before the ICTY with crimes committed in Srebrenica to be transferred to The Hague. He is also one of the last indicted members at large of the VRS Military Command who served directly under Ratko Mladic.

Mr Mladic should reflect on the fact that it is a curious military code in which a general lets his subordinate officers take responsibility for actions they carried out in his name.

The international community will continue to watch closely to see whether the RS authorities follow through with further transfers. All the remaining indictees – including Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic – must be transferred to The Hague without delay. Only then will the obstacle that is hindering BiH’s progress towards NATO and the EU be fully removed.

The High Representative to hold talks with senior State department officials

The High Representative has returned from New York to Washington, where he will hold talks today with senior State Department officials.

Briefing the United Nations Security Council in New York yesterday, the High Representative pointed to the emerging evidence that the RS authorities have begun to respond to the political imperatives of Euro-Atlantic integration. He cited the handover of indictees to the Hague Tribunal in the last two months, but pointed out that while Vinko Pandurevic and other generals have handed themselves in, their commander, Ratko Mladic, remains on the run.

The High Representative noted that the events of the last few weeks do not yet constitute the full co-operation that the Tribunal requires.

“This process will not end until Karadzic and Mladic and every other indictee is in custody,” he said. “The sooner that day comes, the sooner BiH will start to discard the chains of history.”

The High Representative commended the RS authorities for the progress of the last few months, and urged them to maintain this course.

After cooperation with the ICTY, which, the High Representative pointed out, the EU and NATO have made clear is “non-negotiable” the High Representative noted that on Monday, after talks with BiH Prime Minister Adnan Terzic in Brussels, European Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn made clear once again that the other cardinal issue on which the EC expects to see significant progress before mid May is police

restructuring, in line with the principles the Commission has repeatedly espoused.

The High Representative said that while most BiH citizens believe there is too much political influence in policing, that they get a poor service from their police, and that criminals get away too often “there is great if unfounded anxiety in the RS that an end to poor policing arrangements are really a clever ploy to abolish the RS itself.” He reiterated that this is emphatically not the case. Police Restructuring is about making BiH safer. It is a basic requirement of further integration in Europe.

The High Representative also briefed the Security Council on progress being made to amalgamate the functions of the Entity defence ministries into the BiH Ministry of Defence by the end of this year, to establish a single defence budget, and to create single personnel, logistics, and training commands. “BiH needs to make progress on schedule on these objectives, if it is to satisfy the requirements of PfP and if it is to rectify, as it must, the systemic weaknesses which NATO, Carla del Ponte and I have highlighted,” he said.