Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

High Representative Agrees to Extend RS Srebrenica Working Group Deadline

The High Representative, at the request of RS Prime Minister Pero Bukejlovic, agreed yesterday to extend the deadline for the Srebrenica Commission to present its report to the end of March.

At a meeting held yesterday in Sarajevo the RS Prime Minister explained to the High Representative that initial delays in setting up the working group and the sheer volume of work required meant that the working group was not in a position to report by the end of February.

The RS Prime Minister yesterday gave his personal undertaking that the working group would report by the end of this month. The High Representative said [I quote] "I expect you to keep track of the progress of this group and ensure that your ministries cooperate in full…they should be obeying the spirit, as well as the letter of the law". If the March deadline is not met the High Representative said that he would have to consider what action he will take that is appropriate.

On December 16 last year the High Representative required the RS Prime Minister to set up a group to analyse the documentation produced by the Srebrenica Commission, and to identify all officials, with emphasis on those still in the employment of the RS authorities, whose names appear in these confidential annexes. The working group's report is to be delivered both to the State Prosecutor and to the High Representative. The RS Government Working group was established on 13 January 2005.

OHR Monthly Economic Report

I have brought along copies of the latest OHR monthly Economic Report. The trend identified in this report is positive. The trade figures are encouraging. The currency remains strong, and, despite a falling off in trading volume in one of the stock markets, equity trading is robust. One problem, though, is that the latest consolidated figures we have are for January. These statistics are not obscure – they are the principal data used by economic planners and – equally important – prospective investors. The fact that the latest we have are more than two months old only points up the absolute urgency that should be attached to the current effort to provide BiH with a functioning statistics capacity.

High Representative in Banja Luka to Discuss Police Restructuring

As you know, the High Representative is in Banja Luka today. As we speak he's addressing professors and cadets at the Banja Luka Police Academy . Later he'll be meeting RS officials, including Dragan Cavic and members of the RSNA committees in charge of Defence and Internal Affairs. The High Representative will then hold a short press conference at the IPC in Banja Luka at 15.40 this afternoon.

The media advisory we issued yesterday on this visit is available afterward for those of you who may not have seen it.

OSCE

Ambassador Davidson to visit Vitez and Banja Luka

Ambassador Douglas Davidson, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina , is visiting "Srednja skola Vitez /Mjesovita srednja skola Vitez" – a "two schools under one roof" today in Vitez. He will be accompanied by Cantonal Minister of Education Lovrinovic, with whom he will have a separate bilateral meeting following the school visit. Ambassador Davidson will use that opportunity to discuss the Minister's plans to comply with the laws on primary and secondary education which call for administrative and legal unification of 2/1 schools. The Ambassador looks forward to lending his support to the Minister, as Minister Lovrinovic carries out his obligations as a lawful official as well as those commitments made by BiH officials on education reform.

Ambassador Douglas Davidson, the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, will visit Banja Luka tomorrow, Wednesday, 16 March 2005 . During his visit Ambassador Davidson will meet with officials from the Republika Srpska. He will meet with Milovan Pecelj, Minister of Education of RS, Jasmin Samardzic, Minsiter of Refugees and DPs, and conclude the visit with the meeting with Nada Grahovac, the RS Ombudsman. There will a press conference with Ambassador Davidson on 16 March, at 1215 hrs. at the International Press Centre in Banja Luka . The host institutions will be informing about the detail timing and locations of the photo and press opportunities.

EUPM

Police Restructuring Explained

EUPM and OHR continue public information road show on police restructuring

The European Union Police Mission (EUPM) and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) will continue a series of public meetings being held throughout BiH on police restructuring. This weeks events will be held in Bihac, Prijedor and Prnjavor. The purpose of these meetings is to present the Police Restructuring Commission's (PRC) proposal to citizens, police, civil society representatives, and other interested stakeholders, and to open a broad dialogue on the ongoing process of police reform.

Police restructuring will: make it harder for criminals to operate and easier for the police to catch them; give police officers better access to modern crime fighting technology; increase the salaries of police officers and improve their working conditions; allow for significant savings in administration; money that can be spent on schools and hospitals;

This weeks meetings will be held in the Bihac Assembly Hall at 18:00 on 16 March, in the City Theater in Prijedor at 18:00 on 17 March, and at the Dom Kulture in Prnjavor at 18:00 on 18 March.

The meetings will deconstruct the myths linked to police restructuring. Police restructuring is not about abolishing the entities, or the Entity Ministry of Interiors – it's solely about creating an professional police service, accountable to the citizens and effective in fighting crime.

Each public meeting will focus on answering questions from members of the public.

EUFOR

No formal statement.

NATO HQ

I have two points for you today.

NATO Headquarters Sarajevo (NHQSa) welcomes the surrender by ICTY indictee Gojko Jankovic.

We are also very pleased with the reported statement of the Serbian government that it is co operating 'intensively' with the government of Republika Srpska in meeting their commitments to the Hague tribunal.

We hope and expect that this co operation will result in further handovers that we have all been awaiting.

NATO welcomes the comments of RS Prime Minister Bukejlovic that the RS will fully participate in the process of Defence Reform. At the current meting in Mostar two representatives of the RS are present and involved. Concerning this issue, Dr Gregorian will address the Assembly of the RS on Friday.

Q&A:

OHR:

We have some questions. Yes?

Darija Šito-Sučić, Reuters:

Derek, you already mentioned that today apparently Drago Popović, also publicly indicted by the Hague Tribunal, surrendered in Belgrade . So I would like a comment on this because it shows a further sign of something by the government and also the comment by OHR on these surrenders in two days, three days. Darija Šito-Sučić, Reuters.

Derek Chappell, NATO:

Well firstly thank you for informing me of that. It's not the first time that the press have information before I have it. But thank you. I think that these surrenders are very good news. Certainly for Bosnia and for the Balkans in a wider term. It shows that the pressure, the conservative pressure of the international community is paying dividends and that pressure is on many fronts. It's economic, it's diplomatic, it's political, and I think it shows that the tide is turning against the past and in favor of the future.

Kevin Sullivan, OHR:

I wouldn't have anything particular to add to that, other than to say that these are clearly steps, this is a process, which will be completed when all of the indictees are in the Hague and cooperation with the ICTY is paramount in taking Bosnia and Herzegovina forward in the Euro-Atlantic accession process. So I would say that these are steps in the process. Are there some more questions?

Bernard Milošević, SRNA News Agency:

I just wish to check one information. Allegedly NATO has created a list of seven hundred people, naturalized citizens from some states and submitted it to the Office of Prosecution of B&H, so I just wish to check whether such information are true. And one thing was also that NATO requested the Office of the Prosecution to repatriate those people, allegedly.

Derek Chappell, NATO:

I'm glad you raised that question because it allows me to categorically deny it. This is a story that has come up in the past, I believe it originates from Zagreb , from a newspaper in Zagreb . There's no truth to that, we do not have a list of 700 hundred people. The story is false. I can't be anymore plain than that.

Žana Filipović, Radio Free Europe:

Will OHR exert greater pressure on the high officials of Bosnia and Herzegovina , indicted or against who investigations are being led for corruption, criminal activities, taking bribes. Just now the news was announced that Hasan Čengić, a representative to the House of People of the State Parliament, has received instructions from the court of Bosnia and Herzegovina to submit his traveling documents, that he cannot leave the country.

Kevin Sullivan, OHR:

Well there is a process by which problems such as corruption can be addressed. That process is a judicial one and the thrust of efforts to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a society that's as corruption free as possible, has been on ensuring that judicial institutions and the police operate in the best possible way. It's also clear that elected individuals have a particular role and the integrity of the office that they hold and the manner in which they represent Bosnia and Herzegovina has to be taken into consideration. So the judicial process has to move forward, judicial institutions are the appropriate bodies to ensure that that happens and likewise politicians have to consider the position that they hold and act in an appropriate way and the High Representative has made that very clear in the last few days.

Žana Filipović, Radio Free Europe:

So there is no pressure from the OHR as there has been in these last few years. Mr.Šarović was dismissed due to the «Orao» ("Eagle") affair.

Kevin Sullivan, OHR:

Well, there's pressure from the international community to ensure that the judicial institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina are able to create a society in which corruption

is no longer strangling the democracy here, and the institutions must be allowed to do so. In addition to that it’s equally clear that elected officials have to bear in mind the particular responsibility that they hold.

OHR:

Do we have another question?