

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference

OHR supports SIPA and SFOR action against indicted criminal

The OHR fully supports the joint SIPA and SFOR action at the request of the BiH Prosecutors Office that took place in Bileca this morning. The International Community and the BiH authorities are determined to find and arrest all indicted criminals.

It is not for OHR to comment on the details of such an operation but it is important to highlight that upholding the rule of law is an essential element in any democracy and key to building a European future for BiH. Criminals must not be permitted to undermine BiH's future. OHR regrets that someone was injured during this operation and calls on all those indicted by the courts, either in BiH or in the Hague to surrender so avoiding such incidents in the future.

HR meets Chief Prosecutor

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will tomorrow morning meet with the ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, in The Hague. The two will discuss ICTY co-operation in light of the upcoming NATO Summit in December and ensuring effective trials of war crimes cases transferred from the ICTY to BiH at the start of 2005.

The failure of the RS to co-operate with the War Crimes Tribunal is the major barrier for BiH's aspiration to join NATO's PfP Programme. It is also the major barrier to progress towards signing a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. Failure by BiH to meet its international obligations will set back this country's progress and ruin its chances for the security and prosperity that Brussels offers. The RS has not arrested one indicted fugitive to date.

Ambassador Wnendt Visits Sarajevo Catholic School

The Senior Deputy High Representative, Werner Wnendt, yesterday visited the "St. Joseph" Catholic School Centre in Sarajevo where he met with the school's Principle, Ante Mestrovic, and with Bishop Pero Sudar. Ambassador Wnendt expressed understanding for the importance of the role that the Catholic Church plays for Croats in BiH, particularly with regard the upbringing and education of children.

Ambassador Wnendt explained that schools in BiH can be organized to reconcile the two different priorities of education: preserving and developing one's own identity while promoting mutual understanding and trust between the different ethnic backgrounds. Amb. Wnendt underlined that cultural, religious, linguistic and other elements of national identity are guaranteed for all BiH's citizens, and that no differences in criteria would be accepted.

Latest Economic Statistics

I have brought along copies of OHR's latest monthly economic report. As you know, this report brings together monthly figures that offer a snapshot of the BiH economy.

The report shows that the KM continues to enjoy investor confidence. From January to August 2004, the Central Bank sold a net total of KM 434.4 million. This means that the holders of Euro and other foreign currencies, on balance, exchanged more money into KM than the holders of KM exchanged into other currencies.

The report also notes that while BiH's Trade Figures do show a significant rise in exports year-on-year, the value of imports is still larger than exports and, that unemployment figures in the Federation remain stubbornly high.

I have brought along copies of this report with me, those of you interested will also find this report on the OHR web page at www.ohr.int.