

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

High Representative's Tourism Initiative

On the eve of the reopening of Mostar's old bridge, which perhaps best symbolises how far Bosnia has changed from the destruction of the war and will become one of this country's leading tourist attractions, the High Representative and Foreign Minister Mladen Ivanic will tomorrow make a presentation to journalists and travel operators in The Hague on Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress during the last ten years from a war zone to a potential tourist destination. The High Representative will make similar presentations, in Geneva on Saturday, in Stockholm on Monday, in Berlin on Tuesday, in Paris on Wednesday and in London on Thursday. He will be joined by Deputy Foreign Minister Lidija Topic in Stockholm and Berlin and by Foreign Minister Ivanic in Paris and London.

Three BiH tourism experts accompanying the High Representative will speak to European travel operators and the European media about Bosnia and Herzegovina's potential for adventure tourism, mountain tourism and cultural tourism.

The launch of the High Representative's tourism initiative has been accompanied by a concerted effort to make sensible improvements to BiH's tourism infrastructure. The High Representative has called on the authorities to take the necessary steps to enact a Tourism Law that gives the BiH Tourism Association the resources it needs to market this country effectively; the authorities are also being asked to cooperate with BiH hoteliers in getting a single hotel classification system in place throughout the country as soon as possible; and efforts have been undertaken to facilitate

the exchange of tourism expertise with countries that have been able to use tourism as a core element in economic development.

The High Representative's trip will focus on changing still common, and very damaging, misperceptions about BiH. He will highlight the progress that has been made in stabilizing the BiH economy, in making its institutions work more effectively and in fostering the country's integration in Euro-Atlantic structures.

Maintaining international confidence in BiH is crucial in ensuring that the peace implementation process sustains momentum. In addition, translating BiH's tourism potential into foreign exchange earnings and new jobs can play a key role in this country's long-term economic development.

The High Representative and Minister Ivanic will have a meeting with Dutch Foreign Minister Ben Bot tomorrow afternoon. We will give you the details of other ministerial meetings in the course of the trip.

KS is the point of contact, and will be reachable on his Bosnian mobile