

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

HR in Washington

The High Representative will be in Washington on Friday for meetings with US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

The High Representative will use these meetings to underline the progress that Bosnia and Herzegovina has made in specific reform areas with a focus on achieving Partnership for Peace membership and meeting the European Commission's requirements for the start of Stabilisation and Association Agreement negotiations later this year. He will reiterate what he said at the UN Security Council, that the pace of reforms must increase if these targets are to be met. He will also address the current challenges of building BiH's security institutions and expanding the economy to create new jobs.

He will also warn about the risks facing the reform process including what he has described as politics of competitive victimisation as we approach local elections this year. He will also brief Secretaries Powell and Rumsfeld on the threats to the establishment of independent judiciary in BiH.

Intelligence Law

The High Representative looks forward to the BiH House of Peoples following the good example of the House of Representatives and adopting the Law on Intelligence and Security Agency at their next session this Friday. Adopting the Law will help BiH move towards establishing European standards in the security sector. I believe you will all be

familiar with the State Department report on global drugs smuggling and organized crime, where BiH is named as a haven for such activities. This is just one of the reasons BiH needs to show seriousness about its national security. A State-level Intelligence Agency and a State-level police agency are the answer to those threats toward every citizen of this country regardless of age or ethnicity.

This issue relates to a State competency and is therefore a matter for the State Parliament.

OHR, OSCE, EUPM express concern at increasing pressure to postpone evictions

The OHR, OSCE and the EUPM would like to express their concern over the fact that the RS Ministry of Interior and the RS Ministry for Refugees and DPs have not clearly expressed their support to the rule of law and implementation of Property Laws, in cases of exchange contracts.

Both RS ministries appear to be bowing to pressure by DP and Refugee Association in order to illegally postpone evictions, in cases where properties were exchanged across the border.

The OHR, OSCE and the EUPM would like to remind the RS authorities that the current Property Laws already provide sufficient guarantees in cases of valid exchange contracts. Namely, if the pre-war situation can not be restored a valid exchange contract will be upheld. RS municipal Offices of the Ministry for Refugees and DPs are informed of situations where they can lawfully suspend cases and refer them to the Courts. Therefore, there is no need for suspensions of or moratoria on evictions.

From close field monitoring, OHR, OSCE and EUPM have learned that pressure to postpone evictions also comes from displaced persons and refugees who, having repossessed their property in Republic of Croatia or in the Federation BiH, do not want to vacate the properties they are occupying in Republika Srpska.

This is clearly unacceptable and similar claims simply achieve the result of undermining the position of Croatian Serbs in BIH.

PDHR Activities

This morning, the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, will meet the coordinators of the new Economic Regions, which group together municipalities with common socio-economic characteristics. These regions can serve as effective instruments to attract investment, foster enterprise and create new jobs. There will be a press conference immediately after this meeting

at 12.45 on Thursday 4 March

at the OHR in Sarajevo

This afternoon, Ambassador Hays will be in Mostar to take part in a roundtable that will explore ways of making the Bulldozer Initiative's Emergency Reform Units more effective. That meeting will be attended by businesspeople and government leaders. There will be a press conference at the conclusion of the meeting

at 16.45 on 4 March 2004

at the OHR in Mostar

Tomorrow afternoon, Ambassador Hays and Federation Prime Minister Hadzipasic, as well as representatives of the World Bank, the labiyr unions and the Federation Government will have a meeting at OHR to discuss the Federation Law on Bankruptcy, which is an indispensable element in resuscitating the privatization process so that firms can rationalize their status and attract the kind of investment capital that can, over the long term, create new jobs. The meeting will conclude with a press conference

at 15.15 on Friday 5 March

at the OHR, Sarajevo

And also tomorrow afternoon, at the Olip Shoe Factory near Travnik, there will be a meeting organized by the Bulldozer Initiative. The chairs of the six Bulldozer Committees will be joined by business people on the factory floor to talk about ways of getting more citizens to become actively involved in Bulldozer. The meeting will be followed by a photo opportunity and press statements; journalists will be invited to ask questions

from 13.00 to 13.30,

Olip Factory, Borac (near Travnik), Tvornicka bb, Travnik.

I've brought along detailed media advisories on these events.