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

Macedonian Plane Crash

Before you ask: I can confirm that the High Representative will make a short press statement at 12.30 hrs covering the issue of plaincrash. We do not intend to comment on this further.

High Representative’s Speech in Mostar

As you know, the High Representative is in Mostar this morning, where he is delivering the keynote address at the International Investors’ Conference being held in the city. The High Representative will argue the case for international and domestic investment in BiH’s future and he will warn against any return to the “politics of the past”, which could still do untold damage to BiH and its people. As BiH struggles to seize the historic opportunity of membership of Partnership for Peace and the start of Stability and Association negotiations with the EU it would be tragic if mainstream parties fall back on the familiar and easy game of claiming victimisation. I’m quoting now from the High Representative’s speech: “I hope that these Parties, and perhaps more crucially, the newspapers who support them, will resist the temptation of the easy but cynical tactic – for it is also a destructive and sterile one. BiH now has a new future. Elections should be about that future and about celebrating how far down the road BiH has come. Not about the past, with each side claiming that they were the greatest victims then, and remain the greatest victims still.”

The High Representative will highlight BiH’s solid attractions

as an investment destination. The country has a stable currency and near-zero inflation; tight government spending controls are in place and preparations are underway to establish the new, countrywide, European-standard Indirect Tax Administration to collect customs revenues and oversee the orderly introduction of VAT by the start of 2006. The Bulldozer Committees are overseeing a new batch of 50 reforms – with a further 50 scheduled to come on line under Phase III of the Buldozer Initiative which is about to be launched – and this is beginning to have a positive impact on the business environment. The governments have committed themselves to comprehensive short-term and medium-term economic action plans which represent a practical "to-do" list designed to attract investment and create jobs, and BiH is ideally positioned to benefit from mushrooming trade with the European Union and the upsurge in regional trade as a market of 55 million consumers in Southeast Europe is opened up through the Stability Pact's free-trade initiative.

HJPC

The High Representative welcomes the vote in the RS National Assembly today supporting the establishment of a single High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The HR said: "An independent judiciary, independently appointed, is a fundamental principle and a key requirement of the process of European integration. A single HJPC is a central part of that process, and will help ensure that all citizens of BiH are equal before the law and that nobody, not even the richest or the most powerful, are above the law. The vote today shows that the RSNA can indeed be a force for reform and play a leading role in BiH's journey to sustainable statehood and European integration, and is a welcome example of cross-party political support for the reform process."

The OHR also notes that the EC has already invested significant resources restoring the building in Sarajevo that

had earlier been identified for the BiH HJPC. We hope the RS will not want to waste valuable taxpayers money and international assistance, or even delay BiH’s path to Europe, by insisting on a different location.