

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

Statement on PBS

Following public statements by a number of politicians, including RS President Dragan Cavic and BiH Foreign Minister Mladen Ivanic, the OHR would like to correct a number of misunderstandings about the ongoing reforms in the public broadcasting system of BiH.

First, the ongoing reform process is about saving the current System, including the two entity broadcasters, not about abolishing RTRS as some politicians seem to believe. BiH has a single public broadcast System made up of three broadcasters. It is currently in financial crisis, and unless the causes of this crisis are addressed the System faces collapse. That means the broadcasters will have to share infrastructure, not triplicate it.

Second, this reform process is being led by the three ministers of communications at the state and entity levels, not the OHR. They are the ministers directly responsible for ensuring that the legislative and regulatory framework in BiH protects the editorial and financial independence of the country's public broadcast system, in line with European standards. The OHR is providing assistance, including by providing model laws. But it is now up to the ministers to amend these laws and take them through the governmental and parliamentary processes, where they can be debated in the proper way, in the democratic institutions of this country.

Third, if BiH wants to convince the European Union that it is serious about taking responsibility for bringing its

institutions into line with European standards and ensuring they can never again be used to divide the country, then the BiH authorities, not the OHR, must complete these reforms. However, that does not mean the OHR will stand aside and allow the BiH authorities to undo what has already been achieved, including the establishment of a single public broadcast system for this country. But if the OHR does have to intervene, it will damage BiH's chances of joining the EU and will inevitably be seen as a major failure for the politicians involved.

European standards demand that BiH's broadcast system must be independent from politicians and financially viable. Dayton demands that BiH's broadcast system can never again be used to promote propaganda, division and instability. Nobody should be under any doubt that the OHR will intervene if any politician tries to challenge these basic principles.

Economy Roundtable

The High Representative will be speaking at the Economist Roundtable on the BiH Economy, at the Holiday Inn in Sarajevo on Monday. Other speakers will include Chairman of the Council of Ministers Adnan Terzic and Central Bank Governor Peter Nicholl. The High Representative is scheduled to speak at 2.30 on Monday afternoon.

The High Representative will discuss the practical and substantial steps that are now being taken to put the BiH economy on a sound and sustainable footing. He will allude to the successful work of the Indirect Tax Policy Commission and he will call on the BiH Council of Ministers and Parliament to debate and enact the draft ITA law without further delay. The High Representative presented the law to Prime Minister Terzic at the beginning of August but has not yet been discussed by the Council of Ministers.

I would point out that the IMF has issued a statement today

emphasising that implementation of the ITA Law is essential for BiH's overall economic growth and calling on the BiH authorities to enact the Law quickly.

Bjelasnica-Igman Working Group Press Conference

The Bjelasnica-Igman Working Group will hold its seventh session on Friday 19 September 2003. Following the sixth session of the Bjelasnica-Igman Working Group, at Bjelasnica on 28 August 2003, work on the final part of the project's first stage has been completed. Preparations for tendering a total of four hotels at five locations on Bjelasnica and Igman have been completed. The tender process is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The tender for rest stops on ski slopes is already underway, while the tender for the top ski lift on Bjelasnica will be closed at midnight. Chairman of the Working Group, High Representative Paddy Ashdown, Federation Minister for Urban Planning Ramiz Mehmedagic, Canton Sarajevo Prime Minister Denis Zvizdic and other members of the Working Group will hold a press conference at 13:20 at OHR Sarajevo.

Briefing on Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Opening Ceremony

At the end a reminder that the Chair of the Executive Board of the Foundation of Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery, Paddy Ashdown, Amor Masovic and Advisory Working Group Member Abdurahman Malkic will outline the preparations and program for Saturday's ceremony at a press conference to be held at the OHR in Sarajevo at 13.15.

Representatives of the Information Office of the FBiH Government will at this time distribute press accreditation to those journalists who applied for accreditation last week.