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

Anti-looting campaign PR

Looting of apartments and houses remains a serious problem throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. The PLIP agencies (OHR, UNHCR, OSCE and CRPC) are launching a public-information campaign aimed at curbing this problem. Because of looting, many returnees have had to pay for additional repairs or wait for extra practical assistance in order to make their houses habitable again.

The goal of the public-information campaign is to highlight the legal sanctions faced by those who wrongfully remove personal property or fixtures from apartments or houses, or who damage property when they vacate it.

Looting is a criminal act, subject to criminal law. The housing authorities under the property laws have a standing obligation to report cases of looting of apartments or houses to the judicial authorities. Failure to do this, or failure by the judicial authorities to take appropriate measures against such criminal acts, is tantamount to condoning looting.

The campaign will also highlight steps which members of the public can take in order to prevent looting and the actions that members of the public can take if they know that a property is being looted.

PDHR in Bihac and Economic reforms:

The Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, will

visit Bihac tomorrow, where he will meet businesspeople and political leaders. The focus of Ambassador Hays' discussions will be the three core objectives which the authorities have identified as their near-term priority. These are:

- relaunching the BiH privatisation process,
- cleaning up the business environment
- boosting exports.

The Summer Offensive on Unemployment, which will spearhead this effort, involves a series of legislative and administrative tasks that the governments are committed to completing before the autumn. These include passage by the Federation Parliament of the Civil Procedure Code, by the end of August; passage by the BiH parliament of the Framework Law on Accounting and Auditing; consideration by all three parliaments of harmonised Laws on Obligations; fast-track privatisation of a small number of designated companies; and the drawing up of an export action plan by the CoM and Entity governments. This will be the first such action plan jointly agreed by the three governments.

The OHR can't generate jobs, only business can do that, if the governments free up the economy so they can do so. Jobs won't come over night. It took Hungary 2-3 years of determined reform to generate new jobs. But jobs won't come at all unless we liberate now, and do so with determination.

Ambassador Hays will also discuss with Bihac officials, the current campaign to make Bosnia and Herzegovina's public administration more efficient.

Ambassador Hays will visit Bira Company, which has been identified by the authorities as a likely candidate for privatisation before the end of the year, and he will meet with the Canton 1 Prime Minister, and Canton 1 mayors and representatives of political parties. I have brought along a media advisory with details of press opportunities.

Bjelasnica – Igman Project:

This week the Bjelasnica – Igman Project Committee held a meeting. The Committee agreed to publish tenders for the sale of a total of five hotels on Mount Igman and Mount Bjelasnica. The tenders will be published next week in the BiH and international media. The advertisements will run during a 30-day period, and the tender process itself is scheduled to be completed in the 30 days after that.

The Bjelasnica – Igman Project began in May. The Committee includes representatives of Sarajevo Canton, local authorities and a relevant Federation representative, as well as OHR personnel. The Project's aim is to turn Bjelasnica and Igman into modern tourist centres by attracting foreign and domestic investment. It can serve as a model for the ways in which free-market techniques can be used to transform the BiH economy. The natural resources on Bjelasnica and Igman are unparalleled, and the sensible development of the area can provide a significant number of job opportunities and generate income for the community as a whole.

The Project has already undertaken to open a ski lift which will run to the top of Bjelasnica and construct rest stops on the slopes. Details of the Project's activities will soon be available online. There are also plans to produce a TV presentation explaining the project and its aims.