

Transcript of the International Agency's Joint Press Conference at CPIC

Subject: **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE - 3 April 2003**

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:00 hours on Thursday, 3 April 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Oleg Milisic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HR Emphasises the Importance of Specialised Economic Chambers• Power Sector Round Table
b. OSCE	Henning Philipp	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OSCE Permanent Council Meeting• meeting with the Ministers of Finance of the Federation and of BiH Cantons and representatives of the Tax Administration Offices of the Federation of BiH and Cantons
c. EUPM	Jon Oskar Solnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Successful joint operation of BiH police in Sarajevo region, on stolen cars• Joint meeting of Mayors and Police Commissioners in Sarajevo Region
d. UNHCR	Majda Prljaca	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Mary Ann Wyrsh visits BiH
e. ICRC	Sanela Bajrambasic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Book of Missing Persons - Fifth Edition
f. SFOR	Captain Dale MacEachern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members of the North Atlantic Council including the NATO Secretary General scheduled to visit Sarajevo

2. Twenty-five members of the media including four television crews attended the conference.

3. The transcript of the questions and answers is attached.

Oleg Milisic - OHR

HR Emphasises the Importance of Specialised Economic Chambers

The High Representative is as we speak addressing the BiH Council of Ministers to outline the urgency of setting up specialised commercial chambers in certain courts across BiH.

In order to entice investors and lenders to provide needed capital to create new jobs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, potential lenders and investors must be certain that the justice system will permit them to enforce contracts, collect debts and resolve commercial disputes.

The High Representative will say "this is where legal and economic reform cross over, if we do not provide legal assurances to potential investors and lenders, then capital will be invested in other places and so jobs will go elsewhere too. In such a case, the losers will be the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina who will not have an opportunity for new jobs or for capital to institute a new business. These laws are essential to providing these potential investors and lenders those assurances".

In line with this need the OHR has today forwarded drafts of new Civil Procedure Codes to Entity Prime Ministers and Ministers of Justice

These legal reforms are closely linked to economic reforms and form part of the legal reform goals adopted by the Entity authorities – it is important that that these laws be quickly considered and adopted by Entity Governments and Parliaments.

The working groups who drafted these laws were appointed by the Entity Ministry's of Justice and included International experts with the aim of bringing BiH's legislation closer to European standards. These laws will boost much needed investment of private capital, and are an important step in setting up a business environment in which new jobs can be created.

These solutions;

- simplify procedures,
- provide proper and appropriate enforcement mechanisms
- cut out the possibility of unfair and illogical delays and postponements
- require requiring all natural and legal persons to disclose their property if requested to do so by the court
- reassigning certain tasks from the judges to court associates – who will be authorised to conduct most of the enforcement procedures

These laws reduce possible delays in civil proceedings, by emphasising the duties of every participant and by introducing stricter deadlines, without, however, affecting the fairness and quality of the final decision. Efficient and effective court protection is essential for businesses.

The lack of efficient enforcement procedures is recognised as one of the most significant problems in civil cases, so these reforms are designed to eliminate unjustifiable delays, speeding up the process of settling claims.

The IC is in the process of arranging training seminars for judges, lawyers and court staff on these new proposals.

Power Sector Round Table

International donors will host a roundtable on the restructuring of the BiH Utilities sector, with a particular focus on the power sector, tomorrow at the Holiday Inn. Chairman of the Council of Ministers Adnan Terzic, Federation Prime Minister Ahmet Hadzipasic and RS Prime Minister Dragan Mikerevic will participate.

This is the second in a series of roundtables exploring issues related to utilities liberalisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to the three prime ministers, electricity producers, trades unions, and ministries, as well as international experts will address the central issues related to restructuring BiH's power industry. These include promoting rapid and fundamental reform of the power industry in order to protect consumers, build up revenue from electricity exports, create an efficient power sector that can support overall economic regeneration in BiH, and tackle corruption in light of the recent Elektroprivreda audits.

Journalists are cordially invited to cover this roundtable. We will be issuing a media advisory later today.

Henning Philipp – OSCE

This morning Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft addressed the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. Talking about recent developments in BiH he emphasised that the depth and breadth of the challenges still facing BiH would not allow for losing any time. Referring to the recent OSCE audits of BiH public electric companies and the Federation Ministry of Displaced Persons and Refugees he said they have revealed gross mismanagement, lack of transparency, conflict of interest and rampant corruption, involving both public companies and government officials. He added that a just-released OSCE opinion poll confirms that the citizens of BiH are under no illusions about the endemic corruption in the system, and that they have a clear vision of how the situation should be changed to their benefit.

Ambassador Beecroft then gave the PIC an update on the developments in each of the four core program areas of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Talking about education reform he mentioned some of the key objectives to be achieved before the beginning of the next school year:

- Passage of state-level legislation for primary and secondary education.

- Development of a common core curriculum to enable all students in BiH to study together.
- Full implementation of the 2002 *Interim Agreement on Accommodation of the Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children*.
- Defining and addressing the serious access problems encountered by Romani children.
- Signing of the Bologna Declaration and drafting of higher education framework legislation.
- Completion of the draft state-level Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education.

Beecroft continued saying that an agreement on a common core curriculum was essential in enabling children of the different constituent peoples to study and learn together throughout BiH. And in preparation for the 2003-04 school year, the Mission would focus its field monitoring activities on working in cooperation with local educational authorities to unify existing “two schools under one roof” and to end the phenomenon of bussing children to faraway mono-ethnic schools.

On the issue of democratization he mentioned, the Mission would continue its active involvement in capacity building, through its Cantonal Administration Project (CAP) and its Municipal Infrastructure Finance and Implementation (MIFI) project. These projects aim at a more merit-based and cost-effective administration, as well as at realistic budgeting to generate funds for the much-needed development of the economy. Additional moneys generated from revenue should be directed to infrastructure investments and service improvements for the benefit of citizens.

Addressing the field of Security Cooperation Beecroft stated that the pace of change was accelerating significantly. He pointed out that the Secretary-General of the Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM) has presented BiH’s defense targets and pledges, on behalf of the Presidency, to the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) on 30 January. These pledges reflect commitments to establish transparent parliamentary oversight of state-level defence institutions; to ensure civilian command and control over armed forces; and to realize modern and affordable armed forces.

On the Mission’s role in Human rights/Rule of Law the Ambassador mentioned the importance of a regional approach to the return of refugees and displaced persons. He referred to OSCE’s Joint Action Plan which elaborates the key actions that the Mission believes need to be taken to resolve these challenges in a way that will finally let remaining refugees resolve their property claims in a just and equitable manner.

Concluding his presentation Beecroft said: “The pace of reform in BiH is accelerating. This drive for reform reflects the clear expectations of the citizens of BiH. With the support of the Peace Implementation Council we will achieve the conditions necessary for a peaceful and progressive environment — one which relies not on international troops and the frequent exercise of executive powers by the International Community, but on the legacy of good governance that we have imparted to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina themselves.”

On 2 April, the OSCE, in co-operation with the OHR and other international agencies, organised a meeting with the Ministers of Finance of the Federation and of BiH Cantons and representatives of the Tax Administration Offices of the Federation of BiH and Cantons. The meeting focused on ways to improve the flow of information between the Federation of BiH Tax Administration Office and the Canton Ministries of Finance.

The participants discussed how to increase the efficiency, and secure the independence, of tax administrators, intensify the controls on big budget users and harmonize the tax-related regulations throughout BiH.

The meeting concentrated in particular on the need to improve the accurate and timely forecast of tax revenue collection, as crucial to the preparation of sound and realistic budgets. The OSCE sees 2003 as a pivotal year for the preparation of sound and realistic budgets, resulting in Cantons avoiding budget deficits and instead increasing capital investment to encourage economic development and the creation of new jobs in the private sector.

The Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission, Ambassador Zipper de Fabiani, opening the conference said the readiness of the Mission to continue its technical support to the Cantons and other levels of government in BiH to promote better public finance management.

Jon Oskar Solnes - EUPM

1. Successful joint operation of BiH police in Sarajevo region, on stolen cars

The EUPM would like to congratulate the Canton 9 police and their counterparts from PSC Pale on the successful co-operation last month. In accordance with strategic goals of the EUPM, these neighbouring police forces in the Sarajevo region have established a formal and structured relationship in form of a joint task force. One of its first aims was to intensify efforts to prevent car thefts which is a significant problem in Sarajevo and other regions of BiH. Joint intelligence was used in the operation which lasted for most of March. Without being complacent, it can be stated from the statistics compiled in Sarajevo, that the situation dramatically improved as the new efforts were undertaken. This applies to the number of car thefts, ransom paid for stolen cars and stolen cars recovered by local police.

Two statistics examples, the EUPM will give, indicate the improvement of the situation. The former is a statistic figure you would hope to see decrease, that is the daily rate of car thefts. In February, as 64 vehicles were stolen, the daily rate for Canton 9 was 2.4. In March this ratio had gone down significantly to 1.7 stolen cars per day. The second example is simple; in February the local police recovered 6 stolen cars, in March that figure had all but doubled to 11 recovered vehicles. This is a very positive development, and what is more important, there will be further co-operation between these two police forces in the Sarajevo area.

As we at the EUPM have stated, intensified co-operation between the various BiH police forces inevitably will lead to better law enforcement, thus a stronger Rule of Law, making BiH a better place to live for its citizens. Therefore, the EUPM commends the initiators of this positive development which in itself can be considered a small breakthrough for the BiH police.

2. Joint meeting of Mayors and Police Commissioners in Sarajevo Region

The EUPM would like to bring to your attention the meeting of the Mayors of the Sarajevo region which started at 11:00 here in our vicinity in the Tito Barracks. This is the second in a series of meetings on the security situation in the region and the all important security situation for returnees. The EUPM is pleased to note that the Police Commissioners of Cantons 4,6 and 9 intend to attend the meeting, thus facilitating a direct dialogue with municipal authorities at a cross-Cantonal level.

Majda Prljaca - UNHCR

The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms Mary Ann Wyrsh, is visiting BiH from 2-4 April. During the visit, she will meet with the BiH Ministry for Foreign Affairs as well as with senior members of the International Community. Ms Wyrsh will also visit returnees in Nisici, Hadzici, Bratunac, Srebrenica and Zvornik, refugees in the Breza Asylum Centre and displaced persons in Collective Centres.

"I am heartened by the fact that seven years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (GFAP), real and tangible progress in the return of BiH refugees and DPs has been achieved, with some 940,000 former refugees and DPs having returned to their pre-war homes and municipalities in BiH, including some 400,000 so-called minority returns, out of an estimated 2.2 million persons forcibly displaced during the war. Sadly, the BiH Government and the International Donor Community's support for reconstruction activities has not kept up pace with recorded return trends.

I am afraid that unless additional assistance is made available, the impressive momentum gained in the implementation of Annex VII of the GFAP may be stalled, leaving many of those forcibly displaced who still wish to return to their former homes without the much needed support to make their return sustainable", said Wyrsh.

A crucial element supporting returns is the Implementation of the Property Laws in BiH which is nearing completion in a concerted effort by the International Community together with local authorities. "Yet, a repossession ratio of 76%, seven years after the end of hostilities, still leaves more than 56,000 homes to be returned to their pre-war owners. The full implementation of the property repossession process remains thus of vital importance for the successful implementation of Annex VII of the GFAP", said Wyrsh.

The UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees is visiting the region for the first time since her appointment on 1 April 2001 to gain a first hand impression on progress achieved over the past years and tasks outstanding for her Office in BiH.

Sanela Bajrambasic - ICRC

Please allow me to welcome you all on behalf of the ICRC. This organization is present in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1992, and, as I assume you probably already know, deals primarily with the file of the missing persons in relation to the war. Its specific role, under the Geneva Conventions, is to help clarify the fate of those persons who remain unaccounted for and to inform families accordingly. This role was in Bosnia specifically confirmed by the General Framework Agreement for Peace, Annex 7, Article 5.

The process of tracing the missing is ongoing for years, and it involves a number of local and international organizations and institutions. On its side, as a part of activities supporting the process, the ICRC regularly publishes the names of the missing persons in a volume entitled the "Book of Missing Persons on the Territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina". The names of persons reported to the ICRC by their close family members have been sorted out in the Book by alphabetical order and by place and date of disappearance. To date the ICRC has received 20 873 tracing requests.

The first edition of the Book was publicized in June 1996 and it contained 11 000 names. The new Book, which we are presenting today, the fifth edition, is updated on 31st January this year. It contains the names of more than 17 000 persons whose fate has not yet been clarified or was partially clarified, but their human remains have not been found yet. It is, as of today available for consultations in each organization of the Red Cross Society of BiH (Municipal, Cantonal/Regional, Entity and National office) as well as in all ICRC offices throughout the region. Furthermore, the Book is distributed to different organizations and individuals who are actively involved in the process of tracing the missing in BiH, such as ICMP, Commissions for Tracing the Missing Persons, Family Associations, OHR, SFOR, OSCE, UNHCHR, and members of the ICRC chaired Working Group for Persons Unaccounted For from Ministries of Defense, Interior and Justice as well as from the State Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees. The Book is also available at the official ICRC web site: www.familylinks.icrc.org.

Please allow me to also draw your attention to another important issue in relation to the process of clarifying the fate of the missing persons. The 15th Session of the Working Group on persons Unaccounted For was held on 6 February 2003. With the strong support of the international community, this Session can be considered as a success and some participants expressed the hope that the new political environment will be more favorable to seriously address this issue. For the first time, since its establishment in 1996, the parties signed the rules of procedure accepting thus the process of providing the information on the destiny of the missing through this forum. The Working Group, thus can be seen as a new process, and the members have now the support of ministries of Defense, Interior and Justice. ICRC believes that this process must be successful, and will not be suspended any more. The ICRC also expects some concrete answers for the next session planned on September 2003.

The right of the families to find out the fate of their missing family members was also addressed at the beginning of the year in a more broader forum. Namely, in order to heighten awareness of the tragedy lived by countless families of the missing in the world, and moreover to initiate agreement on the best operational practices for the prevention of disappearances and provision of tools to address the problem, the ICRC organized the World Conference on the Missing, late February 2003. Over 350 governmental and non-governmental experts from 86 countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina as one of the most concerned, defined the General principles of the Declaration. In short they pledged for everyone to have a right to find out the fate, including the cause and the place of the death of his/hers closest one. Also, the Declaration defines that official authorities and armed forces are responsible for finding the truth of the missing. Special place in the Declaration is given to the issue of a support to the families of the missing, which includes material, financial, psychological and legal help.

The declaration is to be implemented step by step by all actors involved, throughout the world. The ICRC in Bosnia and Herzegovina will give its utmost in order to see the pledged findings implemented in the country where, according to our data, over 17 000 persons is still unaccounted for.

Captain Dale MacEachern - SFOR

Good morning, I have one point today.

Members of the North Atlantic Council including the NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson are scheduled to visit Sarajevo on Thursday, 10 Apr 03.

We are planning a media opportunity for the afternoon of the visit to take place in the Common Institutions Building. I will have more detailed information on this matter on Tuesday, 08 Apr 03.

Thank You.

Questions and Answers

Q: Fenad Forto - FENA

Could you tell us a little bit more about the objective of this visit of Lord Robertson and NAC? Could you tell us more about the topics which will be discussed? Would it be, will one of those topics will be Orour Affair or the spying affair?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern - SFOR

I don't have specific details of the agenda at this point. But what I can tell you is that the North Atlantic Council regularly meets in order to coordinate the efforts of NATO and they regularly vary the location of where they actually meet. And quite often they will go to locations where NATO missions are ongoing. So basically the whole Orayo issue and the decisions and actions of yesterday by the Office of the High Representative that's strictly coincidental to the fact that this visit is going on.

Q: Vanja Ibpahimbegovic

Yesterday the High Representative said that the removal of the President, Chairman of the Presidency was actually the closure of this responsibility story. But what I'm really interested the report on Orour Affair says that Ladanevenich was also under suspicion of being responsible because he was basically aware of this violation and further the report says because the arrest authorities removed some people had removed some people from office and those people, those officials are not so highly positioned as Mr. Evinich but apparently the aim of this removal was to protect some more senior officials namely Ladanevinich.

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

If I understand the question correctly, it's will anything further happen. I think the High Representative was quite clear on this yesterday with the reforms that have been put in place and the resignation of Meercosharvich. The High Representative is satisfied that the matter, a line can be drawn under the matter and Bosnia and Herzegovina look forward now the reforms that have to take place particularly in the economic field.