

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

Subject: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 27 February 2003

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Thursday 27 February 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Oleg Milisic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annex 7• Returns in Bijeljina• Bozidar Janackovic reaction
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting to discuss OSCE activities and priorities with the new entity and state authorities
c. EUPM	Jon Oskar Solnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No politics in police work• Operation Stolen Cars in Doboj
d. UNHCR	Majda Prljaca	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Return of refugees and displaced persons
e. ICTY	Rafik Hodzic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sentencing judgement of Biljana Plavsic<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ICTY's Plenary• "Role of Witnesses in War Crimes Trials"
f. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Statement

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

3. There were no questions from the media.

Oleg Milisic – OHR

There has been a growth of misunderstanding surrounding Annex 7, what constitutes its implementation and OHR welcomes the opportunity to set the record straight.

Firstly, it will not be the International Community that declare Annex 7 implemented, but it's signatories, those that have a responsibility to implement it; the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina and both it's Entities. The High Representative is the final interpreter of the General Framework for Peace and its Annexes.

OHR's view is that return as described in Annex 7 is not yet complete. While returns statistics and property law implementation statistics are improving, property repossession or even property reconstruction is not what return is all about.

For return to be sustainable requires more than just the key to the door.

Annex 7 requires; proper security conditions, the creation of adequate political, economic and social conditions, and the elimination of all discriminatory practices. This means proper education, pensions, jobs, courts and police.

In fact, Annex 7 lays down the norms that must be respected by any society and in particular a society moving towards European integration.

Furthermore Annex 7 does not only deal with return issues. It also covers issues such as co-operation with international organizations and international monitoring it requires uncovering the fate of missing persons and financing the Commission for Real Property Claims. The international Community will continue to be engaged in this whilst the

leadership of the Bosnia and Herzegovina State and its Entities grows.

One final point, many hundreds of thousands are yet to realize the most basic element of Annex 7, which is the physical return of property. The current estimated need for reconstruction over the next four years – as was agreed by the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its Entities and the PIC on 30 January – is approximately 50,000 properties, whilst the latest PLIP statistics still show that nearly 80,000 property claims remain to be solved.

It is clear there is much yet to be done and that the Bosnia and Herzegovina and Entity Authorities will have to play an ever greater, more effective and European orientated role.

On Tuesday Senior Deputy High Representative Enver Gerhard Schroembgens sent a letter to Bijeljina Mayor Dragomir Ljubojevic calling for an immediate and verifiable change in the municipality's unacceptable attitude towards minority returns.

The municipal leadership has demonstrated a great lack of co-operation, in order to improve the situation for non-Serbs. In fact, returns to Bijeljina Municipality are taking place in spite of, not because of, the local authorities. Returnee needs go unmet while the municipality actively devotes significant resources to encourage Serb DPs to remain.

In his letter, Ambassador Schroembgens pointed out that Mr Ljubojevic and his associates in the local administration have largely failed to devote required attention to a number of issues affecting returnees and their reintegration into the life of the municipality, as discussed with representatives of the International Community late last year.

Overall discrimination against minorities pervades the Bijeljina municipal administration at all levels. Hence, the municipality is faced with the possibility of falling even

further behind the rest of the country in terms of post-war recovery, investment and the creation of a normal multiethnic community. Ambassador Schroembgens in his letter made it clear to Mayor Ljubojevic that this situation cannot continue. All of Bijeljina's inhabitants are suffering because the municipality has failed to fulfill its responsibilities. It is now up to the local administration to undertake a fundamental change of course.

Following last week's roundtable on utilities liberalization at which representatives of the international financial institutions and Bosnia and Herzegovina business people discussed Bosnia and Herzegovina's expensive and noncompetitive phone system, there has been considerable debate in the press about how to liberalize the telecoms market more effectively. Some in the telecoms industry claim that the telecoms market in Bosnia and Herzegovina has already been liberalized. It hasn't. If it were properly liberalized, phone-calls would be cheaper.

The General Director of Mobilna Srpska argues that his company is already taking advantage of liberalization. In fact Mobilna Srpska, which has a very positive record in this respect, is taking advantage of partial liberalization. Once the telecoms market in Bosnia and Herzegovina is fully liberalized, Mobis and other companies will be able to offer consumers even more competitive services.

Mobis has rapidly expanded its network throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina – which makes a great deal of sense: why be content with half a market when you can have a whole one – but it has some way to go. Mobis now serves around 60 percent of the Bosnia and Herzegovina population. Its license requires it to serve at least 80 percent. It is well on the way to doing this and we hope it will achieve this target by May 2004.

Mobis cut its tariffs last year when its two competitors reduced their tariffs and introduced new services. That is

real and direct evidence that competition works in the interests of the citizen. But there is plenty of room for more price cuts right across the Telecoms sector (in particular for international calls). We are not yet seeing in Bosnia and Herzegovina the sort of discount subscriber payment plans that are offered in fully liberalized markets. When that happens, more Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens will be able to afford mobile phones. At the moment, mobile-phone use in Bosnia and Herzegovina is less than a third of the European Union average. Bosnia and Herzegovina has the lowest mobile-phone use of all 13 European Union candidate countries.

The conclusion of the roundtable was that a sluggish telecom sector will hold back economic growth – that it will hold back job creation. That remains the case. Nothing that has been said in the press over the last few days changes that basic fact.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, Head of the OSCE mission, will be meeting with Adnan Terzic, Chairman of the Council of Minister today at 16.00.

The purpose of the meeting, as the ones he has had in Sarajevo and Banja Luka recently, is to discuss OSCE activities and priorities with the new entity and state authorities.

The Agencies engaged in the Property Law Implementation Plan (OHR, UNHCR, OSCE, CRPC) would like to clarify that completion of Property Law implementation does not equal completion of Annex 7. While property law implementation is the fundamental first step it is only one among many of the elements underpinning sustainable return. Full implementation of Annex VII means that not only can people return to their homes but that they can do so safely with equal expectations of employment, education and social services.

Therefore the PLIP agencies call on the local authorities to

accelerate the pace of property law implementation and at the same time redouble their efforts to create the conditions conducive to sustainable return.

Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

Wednesday, 26 February, EUPM commissioner Sven Frederiksen was in Mostar, where he met with high ranking political and police authorities. Among those he met were the Minister of Interior and the Police commissioner in Canton 7 and the Mayor and the local police chief in Mostar. One of the key messages of the EUPM commissioner was, do not mix politics and law enforcement. This goes for police work as well in general in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is, ministers should not interfere with operational police work. However, the EUPM commissioner and the Mayor of Mostar agreed that at a local municipal level a open and frank dialogue and information sharing between the police and municipal authorities would be helpful.

The EUPM commissioner further put an emphasis on more transparency of law enforcement to the public and stressed the importance of minority recruitment of police officers.

The EUPM commissioner will continue visits to the various regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to emphasise the importance of the separation of politics and law enforcement. It is of immense importance, in order to increase the confidence of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their police forces.

A nice piece of police work in Pelagicevo a few days ago. The local police drew up a careful operational plan and launched a Stolen Cars operation at the Loncari car market. It involved around 50 police officers from Doboј and Pelagicevo. The market was surrounded by the police officers and all 222 vehicles were checked. 20 vehicles were seized on the spot, most due to customs violations others because of lack of documentation. These are the ones that were seized. However,

there were also an impressive number of 27 vehicles simply abandoned by their alleged owners. These vehicles are now being checked by the local police.

The EUPM would like to congratulate the Bosnia and Herzegovina police on their professionalism regarding the operation.

Majda Prljaca– UNHCR

Concluding a series of meetings between UNHCR and the highest religious authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Udo Janz, Acting Chief of Mission for UNHCR in BiH yesterday met with Orthodox Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia Nikolay to exchange views on progress made over the past years in the return of refugees and displaced persons of all constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr Janz briefed Metropolitan Nikolay on the increasing momentum in so-called minority returns recorded especially since 2000 since when some 284,728 Bosnia and Herzegovina refugees and displaced persons have returned home including some – 92,064 Bosnian Serbs

In an open discussion on what has been achieved to date, Mr Janz stressed that the International Community continued to work towards the full implementation of Annex VII of the GFAP, and increasingly so in close collaboration with responsible Ministries of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as its Entities.

Both interlocutors agreed that repossession or reconstruction of property can only be as a first step in the return process, with Metropolitan Nikolay stressing the absence of employment opportunities for returnees as one of the greatest obstacles towards sustainable return.

Metropolitan Nikolay underlined the important role of the Orthodox Church as well as all other religious congregations in Bosnia and Herzegovina to spiritually accompany the returnees, and towards reconciliation and mutual respect of all constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and

expressed his full support for the work of UNHCR and the International Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the accomplishments achieved to date.

Rafik Hodzic – ICTY

Good morning,

I have three items for you today.

The first is the preview of today's sentencing judgement of Biljana Plavsic. Biljana Plavsic was indicted by the ICTY for genocide and crimes against humanity for her role in the crimes committed by Serb forces against Bosniaks, Croats and other non-Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the armed conflict here. She voluntarily surrendered on 10. January 2001 and was subsequently provisionally released pending trial on 6 September 2001. Originally, Plavsic pleaded "not guilty", but a year later she changed her plea to "guilty" on the count of her indictment charging her with persecution of non-Serb population as a crime against humanity. This charge contained detailed description of the widespread and systematic attack directed against non-Serb civilians, as well as her role in that campaign and her acts and omissions directed against the victims. Biljana Plavsic is the first senior political leader from the Bosnian Serb leadership who admitted to the existence of such systematic attack against civilian non-Serb population during the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the plea agreement, Biljana Plavsic specified she would not be ready to testify as a prosecution witness in any other trial before the Tribunal, while the Office of the Prosecutor declined to ask for a reduction of sentence on the basis of co-operation. So, in the sentencing hearing the Prosecution asked for a sentence of 15-25 years, while the defense sought a sentence of maximum of eight years.

The second item is related to a session of ICTY's Plenary scheduled for later today. The judges will be choosing the new

president to replace outgoing president Claude Jorda who has been selected to serve as a judge in the newly established International Criminal Court.

And the third item is about a publication I have for you today titled "Role of Witnesses in War Crimes Trials", published by the Open Society Fund in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In essence it is a transcript of a conference held in Banja Luka in June that dealt with this issue. In our opinion, presentations by judges, prosecutors, victims groups' representatives, lawyers, representatives of the media, governmental and non-governmental institutions and the ICTY given at this conference raise numerous questions regarding the issue of witness protection, but also offer many answers to those questions. Considering that the issue of witness protections has been marked as the most important to be resolved in view of possible transfer of cases by the ICTY to local courts, but also that it is this issue that seriously undermines local war crimes trials. We believe this publication can be of use to many involved in this process but also to journalists interested in the issue.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

No Statement.