

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

Subject: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 17 December 2002

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 17 December 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Oleg Milisic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decisions on Federation 2003 Budget• HR Parliament Speech
b. OSCE	Henning Philipp	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Orientation Workshop, titled "Elements of Successful Work"• Completion of the Drafting Process of the State Law on Education.
c. UNMIBH	Alun Roberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Electronic copy is not available
d. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement.

2. Twenty-one members of the media including two television crews attended the conference.

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

*A. Ollivier
Col. (FR A),
Chief Operations and Plans*

Mario Brkic – OHR

OK Good Morning everybody first let me say or express to you our apologies for that late start.

I have two statements for you today, the first regarding the decision made by the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown last night, issued a Decision enacting the BiH Federation budget for 2003.

The Federation House of Representatives, which had already passed the budget, had asked the High Representative to do intervene since the Federation House of Peoples hasn't been convened yet and so – obviously – could not approve the budget this week in time to release vital international assistance.

The House of Representatives was concerned that failure to enact the budget this week would jeopardize the IMF stand-by agreement for BiH. The High Representative said: "I have taken this decision to ensure that this vital interest funding is not lost to the citizens of BiH on account of the House of Peoples not being constituted in time."

Now that the budget has been enacted, the second tranche of this agreement, worth around US\$15 million, can be disbursed. There were also other major international aid programs which would have been called into question if the budget had not been enacted. Details are in a press release, which is available on the table outside, and obviously according to established procedures, the Federation Parliament will need to adopt both items of legislation as soon as the House of Peoples is constituted.

Secondly, as we speak, the High Representative is addressing the BiH House of Representatives. He wanted to give a speech as soon as possible to the new State parliament, because in

his view, this new parliament will be the most important in BiH's post-war history.

The reason is simple. During its four-year mandate, BiH will either reform or fail. Much of the responsibility for what course BiH takes will rest on this parliament. The High Representative will also focus on the next few months, setting out the key reform priorities that should be top of the parliament's agenda: unifying the customs administration to end expensive bureaucratic duplication and cut down on fraud; and agreeing to introduce VAT at the state level by the end of February 2003, which will done replace the fractured and corrupted sales tax regime.

The High Representative will remind the members of the House of Representatives that "under the current corrupt and divided sales-tax and customs systems the citizens of BiH lose over 1.2 billion KM every year- three times the entire state budget. The money goes to criminals instead of being spent on schools, hospitals, jobs and pensions." No rational person wants to maintain this shocking system.

The High Representative will state that "foreign aid is declining sharply, unemployment is high, economic growth is low, inward investment is almost non-existent, and there is a huge balance of payments deficit" (as you know BiH spends four times more on imports than it earns in exports).

He will go on, and I quote, to say "Economic disaster is staring this country in the face. Bankruptcy is just around the corner. The only solution is fast and efficient reform – The only other option is to slash imports, and that would make the economy contract, which would mean even higher unemployment, more poverty and social dislocation.

The High Representative will urge parliamentarians to listen to business representatives, particularly proposals from the business world that have been collected by the bulldozer

committee. These are practical suggestions on how to get rid of red tape so that entrepreneurs can start new businesses and expand existing ones, generating wealth and creating jobs.

The High Representative will also call for governments at all levels to be formed as soon as possible – as you know today is the deadline for the nomination of the Council of Ministers' Chair. The sooner governments are in place, the sooner reforms can move ahead. The High Representative will emphasize that the key is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the State; this doesn't mean a centralized state but one that works for the services, works for — serves the citizens much better.

I've brought along copies of the High Representative speech, there are also translations which you'll find on the tables outside.

That's what I'll have you today. Thank you.

Henning Philipp – OSCE

Good Morning everybody. I would like to mention some of the recent activities of the democratisation department. On 10-11 December, OSCE conducted an Orientation Workshop, titled "Elements of Successful Work", for deputies of the Sarajevo Cantonal Assembly. The workshop, which took place in, the framework of OSCE's Cantonal Administration Programme (CAP) focused on effective legislative work and parliamentary best practices. Assembly representatives identified as priority areas for follow up the revision of the current "Book of Procedures" to strengthen committee work, the introduction of a "Code of Ethics" and the need for improving relations between the executive and the legislative, as well as with citizens. The Orientation Workshop was well received by all Assembly representatives. Significant reform of the public administration in this Canton would set a helpful precedent and pave the way for successful reform in all Federation

Cantons.

On 12-13 December, under its Parliamentary Support Project, OSCE assisted the staff of the Parliament with the organisation of a training session for new Members of Parliament.. Amongst other issues, the training covered the Rules of Procedures of the House of Representatives, rights and obligations of representatives, the Parliamentary Assembly's relations with other institutions, conflict of interest and immunity and the organisation of the Parliament Assembly Secretariat. This training, which was highly appreciated and well received, reinforces OSCE's ongoing efforts to improve the work of Parliamentary Assemblies on all levels of governance.

My final point on education: From 12-14 December, Representatives from the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, the Council of Europe, OHR and OSCE held a seminar to finalise a draft of the State-level Law on Education in primary and secondary Schools. This working session resulted in a draft law consisting of 62 articles. The draft incorporates the advice from the Council of Europe and local experts. The Education Reform Agenda requires that the draft law be submitted to the State Parliament no later than 15 January 2003.

Important elements of the draft law are the establishment of a common core curriculum and new provisions on catchment areas, defining in which schools pupils from a certain geographic area should enrol.

That's all I have, thank you

Alun Roberts – UNMIBH

Electronic copy is not available

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

Nothing from SFOR this morning.

Mario Brkic – OHR

Are there any questions?

Questions and Answers

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC NEWS

Yves, just a routine question. Any news on Fiuljanin?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

No, there is been no, no update, with regard to the detention of Fiuljanin at MND North. Our investigation continues but there is nothing new to report.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC NEWS

OK, thanks

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – REUTERS

Alun, when can you expect to find all results of the certification process and the final figures?

A: Alun Roberts – UNMIBH

We will be close to watch the end of the year, I will think.

I mean the process of reviewing appeals that come in is on going by the reviews panel, which then passes them back. The reviews panel is made up from various specialists from UNMIBH separate from IPTF, that made the original determinations. When the review panel is finished it's considerations of the appeals by the police officials. They are passed back to the IPTF Commissioner suggesting that these be re-considered again by the commissioner, so it will be toward the very end of the

year we will have a final set of figures, so bear with us.

Q: Zeljko Tica – RTV F BiH

Question for Alun. What happen with the appeals of the nineteen police officers?

A: Alun Roberts – UNMIBH

In regards to the appeals of the nineteen I mean if. They'll be considered as part of the whole view process, but what I want to be very clear, I think , it is the tendency here to suggest that because of this court case of which the nineteen were accused of physical abuse, that if they should be acquitted therefore it means that the UN Mission would probably consider the verdict and try maybe to overturn their non certification, that's not the whole picture at all. We are looking of the whole process of seven different criteria, which I can give to you in detail if you want, but it's along the bounds that these nineteen along with the other four hundred and seventy-two with did no received falsifications, have not met fully any of those seven or maybe several of them. If the nineteen have appealed then I'm quite sure the status of that. That appeal will be looked at by the review panel across the board of seven criteria, no just this one case and quite frankly it isn't going to give preference to some groups of police officials whether it's nineteen or twenty-three, we'll look at the whole package for seventy-two and as of those I said a number of requests for review, we're looking at those reviews is in detail on a one by one basis regardless who they may be.

Q: Zeljko Tica – RTV F BiH

However there is an information in the daily press that twenty-two police officers from this support unit from which the said nineteen police officers are coming from, that the appeal has been rejected. Can you either confirm or deny that piece of information?

A: Alun Roberts – UNMIBH

You shouldn't believe everything you read in the press. I think that every single case that is submitted regardless of whether the press gives publicity to it, will be reviewed and it's an issue that each police officer who receives in writing a letter stating why he or she would not get found justification will write back given as is requested in the original letter accompanying documents which the review panel will look at toward requesting that the commission should reconsidered the cases.

Q: Ibrahimbegovic Vanja – BHTV 1

Is the High Representative going to declare the law on statehood by New Year?

A: Mario Brkic – OHR

I would say first of all this is a matter for the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At his speech today to the House Representatives, the High Representative will highlight how important it is for government to be in place so that issues like this, what the High Representative calls the "people business", can be resolved at the same time. As you know the High Representative has said that he will act where it's clear that the interest of BiH citizens would be damaged if it for so therefore where it's clear that the interest of BiH citizens would be damaged he will act. Though I'm not going to speculate right now about that any further.

Mario Brkic – OHR

If that's it? Thank you all very much.