

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

Subject: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 5 September 2002

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Thursday 5 September 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Kevin Sullivan	• Meeting of Commission on Public Corporations. • SDHR had a meeting with the RS Refugee Minister. • Farewell to Major Lundy. • Reminder for PDHR.press conference.
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• OSCE and OHR call for revalidation review to be completed. • ODIHR office being set up in BiH.
c. UNMIBH	Kate Frieson	• SRGS calls on the Schengen Countries to remove visas for BiH citizens.
d. UNHCR	Majda Prljaca	• UNHCR press conference 9 Sept. 02.
e. Rafik Hodzic	ICTY	• No statement.

f. SFOR	Major Scott Lundy	• Operation HARVEST. • Farewell.
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2. Twenty-nine members of the media and five television crews attended the conference.

3. There were no questions and answers.

C. Barraud

Lt. Col. (FR A),

Chief Operations and Plans

Kevin Sullivan– OHR

Good morning, everybody. Thank you very much for coming. I just had to provide a text for the interpreters, since they seem to have trouble sometimes with my accent. I cannot understand why. Two short items from the Office of the High Representative this morning.

The first concerns the meeting tomorrow at the Office of the High Representative of the Commission on Public Corporations, which will address the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina's road network and the need for a fully co-ordinated approach to road infrastructure planning and financing.

Potholed roads are, or should be, a major election issue. Tomorrow's meeting will examine practical steps towards improving the quality of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina by improving its road network, which would obviously make it a lot easier for travellers, but in addition to that, this would be what represents an essential boost to the economy.

The entire road network in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in poor condition and needs major re-construction. This in turn needs a co-ordinated planning effort. A countrywide plan and feasibility study has to be developed on the basis of recommendations already provided by the Japanese

Transportation Master Plan. Once that comprehensive plan is drawn up it will then be possible to begin organising the financing of the comprehensive re construction of the Bosnia and Herzegovina road system.

The Commission on Public Corporations was established by Dayton and it is attended by the Entity Prime Ministers, other ministers and the World Bank it is chaired by the Office of the High Representative. The reason this is important is that you cannot run half a road network or half a rail network. You have to have co-operation. This is another area where co-operation delivers results and an absence of co-operation delivers potholes.

The second item concerns a visit yesterday to Banja Luka by the Senior Deputy High Representative, Gerhard Enver Schroembgens. He had a meeting with the Republika Srpska Refugee Minister, Mico Micic. At the meeting, they discussed recent progress on property law implementation in the Republika Srpska.

The Senior Deputy High Representative expressed his appreciation of the efforts undertaken so far by the Ministry in the Republika Srpska this year. He also expressed concern about the budgetary shortfall for funding of the OMI offices and encouraged the Republika Srpska government to request the Republika Srpska National Assembly at its next session to secure funding for the OMI staff and operations until the end of this year. That is all from Office of the High Representative.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

Good morning. I have two points for you today.

The first one is from the Office of the High Representative and OSCE collectively. It is about revalidation.

The Office of the High Representative and the OSCE wish to

express their concern that although revalidation commissions reviewing the legality of revalidation's of occupancy rights allocated between 1992 and 1998 have now been formally appointed throughout most of Bosnia and Herzegovina, they have by-and-large not yet begun to function properly.

In order to facilitate the process of revalidation review, the OSCE and the Office of the High Representative therefore wish to set out very clearly their expectations of the authorities at all levels of government. The revalidation process is essential because there are still a significant number of illegally allocated unclaimed apartments that need to be made available as alternative accommodation.

On 26 July 2002, Ambassador Donald Hays, the Office of the High Representative's Principal Deputy High Representative, and Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, the OSCE's Head of Mission, wrote both Entity Prime Ministers a letter emphasising the urgent issue of legal review of revalidation's. The letter sets out several concrete expectations that the Office of the High Representative and the OSCE expect Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities at all levels to respect and implement.

In addition to these expectations, the Office of the High Representative and the OSCE urge the responsible authorities to immediately take steps to ensure appropriate compensation to all those involved in the revalidation review process whose duties in this regard are above and beyond the scope of their regular work. In many cases, the failure to resolve this issue has blocked the work of Revalidation Commissions. This failure jeopardises the ability of the Entity authorities to complete this process within legal deadlines.

The Office of the High Representative and the OSCE urge the Entity authorities to demonstrate their commitment to rule of law by resolving these issues and expeditiously completing the process of revalidation review. The letter sent to the Entity

Prime Minister along with the press release is available on the table outside.

Secondly, I want to inform you that the election observation mission from ODIHR, that is the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, is setting up in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The mission, headed by Peter Eicher, will hold a press conference here in CPIC, this coming Tuesday, immediately following the regular press conference. Since the mission is currently setting up, they have requested that media enquiries wait until the press conference on Tuesday. Thank you very much.

Kate Frieson – UNMIBH

Hello from UNMIBH. I have one item today.

It relates to a new initiative proposed by Special Representative of the Secretary General Klein, calling on the Schengen Countries to remove visas for Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens as part of a plan to integrate the Balkans into Europe. This was made at a seminar address in Halki, Greece yesterday, where Mr. Klein is participating in an international conference on the European Union in the Balkans.

Mr. Klein said, "The impact on the common citizen to have the ability to travel freely without visa restrictions, would be a strong of show of commitment by the Schengen Countries to integrate Bosnia and Herzegovina into Europe."

In his contributions to this seminar, Mr. Klein said, "The timing was right to consider lifting visa restrictions for Bosnia and Herzegovina nationals travelling to the Schengen Countries in Europe, since Bosnia and Herzegovina had the best border police service in the Balkans and, moreover, the citizens' identification protection system would be operational next year." In his words, all the pieces of a modern European border management system will be in place.

Mr Klein also underlined the fact that the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina would soon conclude the largest and most comprehensive police reform and restructuring mission in the United Nations history, that will leave Bosnia and Herzegovina with a police force fit for Europe.

Mr. Klein emphasised in his conclusion that lifting visa restrictions for Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens would promote interdependent relationships in the region, an assured European identity and demonstrate that the fate of the Balkans and the wider European Continent is a common enterprise. The full story and text of the speech will be posted on UNMIBH's website. I also have copies of the speech for you. Thank you.

Majda Prljaca – UNHCR

Good morning from UNHCR.

UNHCR is inviting all media representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina to a farewell press conference of Mr. Werner Blatter, UNHCR Regional Co-ordinator for Southeast Europe and Chief of Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The press conference will take place on 9 September 2002 at Fra Angjela Zvizdovica, UNIS Tower 1, 7th floor in the UNHCR conference room, starting at 11:30.

During the press conference, Mr. Blatter will represent the latest return statistics for Bosnia and Herzegovina and will focus on UNHCR's future in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thank you.

Rafik Hodzic – ICTY

Good morning. No statement from the ICTY today.

Major Scott Lundy – SFOR

Good morning from SFOR. I have one point for you today related to Operation HARVEST.

The number of illegally-held small arms, ammunition, grenades, mines and other war-making devices that have been collected since we began this year's operation is truly remarkable. The number of small arms, ammunition and hand grenades collected during the period January 1st to August 31st 2002, represents an increase of 200 percent compared to the same eight-month period last year.

The Commander of SFOR, Lieutenant General John B. Sylvester, is very pleased with these results and the co-operation and support local citizens, police and the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina have demonstrated in this year's Operation HARVEST.

Much of this year's success can be attributed to SFOR's collection teams, which have been going door-to-door to inform residents of Operation HARVEST and ask them to turn in any weapons or munitions they might have in their household with complete amnesty. Soldiers from Multinational Division Southwest did just this on Monday at a large apartment complex in Prijedor. Among the items recovered were:

*44 small arms;
47 hand grenades;
7000 rounds of ammunition (calibre 20 mm and below);
24 rounds of medium-calibre ammunition and
87 other explosive items.*

While people who store weapons or ammunition in their houses endanger themselves and their families, those who store such items in their apartments also endanger their neighbours and their families. Indeed, much of the ammunition that was turned in on Monday was within easy reach of children. Several explosive detonators were found in a bedroom in one apartment, and a hand grenade was found on a mantle piece of another.

Operation HARVEST has collected the following items during the period between January 1st and August 31st 2002: nearly 6,500

small arms, 1.5 million rounds of ammunition, almost 3,500 mines, nearly 30,000 hand grenades, and 6,400 Kgs of high explosives.

On a personal note, I would like thank all my colleagues who have shared the stage with me over the last six and half months for their support and assistance. They have been great friends.

To you in the audience and all of those who are not here today, thank you very much for having a professional, collegial working arrangement with me. I know sometimes it was frustrating trying to get information from SFOR, but we did our best to get it to you in timely fashion. I have really enjoyed working with all of you.

I will be heading home next week. My replacement has arrived; I would like him to stand up. Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier is also from Canada and is also a Public Affairs officer. I would expect and encourage you all to support him in the same way you have done so well for me.

Thank you very much. I will always remember Sarajevo very fondly for this time and I may, in fact, end up working with some of you again in the future. That is all from SFOR.

Kevin Sullivan – OHR

Thank you very much. On behalf of the rest of us on the podium, we would also like to express our appreciation and fulsome gratitude for the collegial co-operation which Scott has given us over the last six months. It has been a very stimulating experience working with you. We look forward to working with Yves.

The only other point is at 12:00, the Principle Deputy High Representative Don Hays, will be here. He will talk about the first 100 days of the High Representative and he will take questions. I hope you will stay on for that.

Do we have any questions...we have ten minutes to kill...so will somebody ask a question...even an obnoxious question...would anybody like recite a poem or sing a song?

(Laughter).

Okay then. 12:00. Principle Deputy High Representative Don Hays. Thank you very much.