

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

CPIC/Media Conferences

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 1130 hours on Tuesday 11 June 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Julian Braithwaite	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministerial responsibility• Condolences• Property law deadline
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elections
c. UNMIBH	Stefo Lehmann	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verification of police officers' housing status• Ceremony for UN Trust Fund donation in Prijedor<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RS Police Academy application deadline
d. SFOR	Major Scott Lundy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement

2. Twenty-seven members of the media and four television crews attended the conference.

3. There were no questions.

*C Minck
Col (FR A),
Chief Media Operations and Plans*

Julian Braithwaite – OHR

I would just like to set out Paddy Ashdown's views on ministerial responsibility. You have probably read about it in the papers in the past few days. The first point I would like to make is that this is about setting standards, it is not about personalities.

In most western European countries, ministers are held accountable for the actions or inactions of their ministries. If a major scandal breaks and an investigation begins, ministers are expected to resign.

This has nothing to do with whether they are guilty of corruption or not. This is about political accountability and responsibility. If Bosnia and Herzegovina is to become part of Europe, then it needs to adopt these sort of European standards.

This is obviously a process. We cannot yet apply this principle to everybody until there is a functioning judiciary free from political control.

But Paddy Ashdown believes that Ministers of Finance are a special case. They have a special responsibility to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the minister in overall charge of the budget, to ensure that public funds go to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina that need them, not to criminals or to the well connected.

Ministers of Finance also have a special responsibility as the main contact points with the international financial institutions that support the Republika Srpska and Federation budgets. Their credibility and probity affect the ability of Bosnia and Herzegovina to appeal to the international financial institutions and others for financial assistance.

There has been a lot of comment in the past couple of days about the AM-SPED affair. But Paddy Ashdown believes the Republika Srpska Customs scandal is just as serious and raises the same implications for ministers. Let me repeat this is about standards, not personalities.

Tens of millions of Konvertibilnih Maraka (convertible marks) of customs duty that should have gone into the Republika Srpska budget for schools, hospitals and pensions were instead diverted into criminal bank accounts.

Paddy Ashdown obviously has a lot of sympathy with the Republika Srpska pensioners who yesterday demanded to know why their pensions are not being paid.

He believes that the Republika Srpska Government needs to clean up the Republika Srpska customs and not just talk about it, and that the Minister of Finance needs to take responsibility for what has happened in his department under his supervision.

I would just like to also say that Paddy Ashdown has written to the Speaker, Dragan Kalinic, and also to Mr. Dzevad Hodzic to express his condolences about the death of Fatima Hodzic yesterday, delegate of the Republika Srpska National Assembly.

We will be sending round a press release about that. He says in his letter that, "It was with deep regret and sorrow", that he learned of the death of Mrs. Hodzic. The fact that this tragedy occurred as she was travelling to the Banja Luka to participate in a session of the Republika Srpska National Assembly on behalf of her constituents makes her untimely death all the more tragic.

One other item. We would like to remind people once more that, as part of the December 2001 amendments to the property laws, a new deadline of July 1, 2002 was set for people to submit claims for the repossession of their pre-war socially owned apartments if they were devastated and uninhabitable

when the previous deadline expired.

That means you still have a chance to submit a claim no matter whether or not your property is still uninhabitable or whether it has been reconstructed. You must do so by July 1, 2002.

This information will be broadcast in TV spots and radio advertisements that you may have already seen.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

I am going to repeat myself and others. I hope you do not mind that. It concerns elections and two essential factors involved: registration and financing.

Firstly, we are looking forward to see the retroactive KM 600,000, pledged by the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities, materialise, now that the state budget has been passed. The pledge was for KM 100,000 a month, for the year 2002, for basic operating costs for the Election Commission Secretariat. That is altogether KM 1,2 million and since we are in June that makes KM 600,000 that the Election Commission is waiting for. Again, I want to remind the authorities that they have to live up to their commitment to conduct elections, for the voters to take them seriously as well as international donors.

Secondly, much of this is in vain if people do not register. Again I call on voters, especially first time voters, to ensure that they have the opportunity to vote on October 5 elections. Not registering is not a passive choice; it is a conscious decision not to have any say in how this country is run or its future.

There are some positive examples, for instance in Tuzla, where the Youth Network, with the support of OSCE Tuzla and the Municipality, has conducted a campaign for youth voter registration and increased the number of new registrants by a couple of hundreds.

Finally, the OSCE wants to offer its condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Fatima Hodzic, a Republika Srpska National Assembly delegate who was killed in a car accident yesterday.

Stefo Lehmann – UNMIBH

As part of our ongoing efforts to verify the housing status of all police officers in this country, the IPTF Commissioner had sent a letter to the Republika Srpska Minister of Interior, Jovicic in May informing him of the results of our verification operation in the Zvornik Public Security Centre. The process, aimed at ensuring that no law enforcement agents are in violation of property laws, determined that 155 police officers in the Zvornik Public Security Centre had not clarified their housing situation. Mr. Jovicic was informed that these officers had until the end of May to prove their legal housing status or vacate the properties. Officers failing to do this would have their provisional authorisations removed and would not be granted final certification.

Last week, after having received and assessed the requested documentation, UNMIBH was able to determine which police officers would in fact obtain final certification.

Of the 155 officers, 99 have now verified their legal occupancy. 15 did not submit proper documentation and therefore will not be granted final certification. Ten submitted documentation after the deadline and will not be granted final certification and 31 officers have terminated their service with the Zvornik Public Security Centre.

During our current phase of verifying the legal housing status of all police officers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, approximately 1,900 officers have been interviewed between November 2001 and May 2002. Of this number, approximately 800 cleared their housing situation prior to the UN's intervention, approximately 480 cleared their housing status

following UN intervention, 500 are currently under investigation or their deadlines have not expired and 80 will not be granted final certification.

Throughout the year we expect to verify the housing status of up to 3,000 officers. Officers not in compliance with as you may know are given one month to legalise their housing situation or face de-authorisation and will fail to obtain final certification.

A ceremony marking a UN Trust Fund donation for a major waterworks project in Prijedor will be held tomorrow in the Stari Grad settlement of Prijedor at 1030 hours.

Representatives of the local community, local authorities and the United Nations will be in attendance. The Special Representative of the Secretary General Jacques Paul Klein will address the ceremony and will officially inaugurate the waterworks project with the Mayor of Prijedor, Nada Sevo. The project is worth approximately KM 150,000, and it has provided a water supply system to the Stari Grad. As a result, potable water has been distributed to some 100 houses in the area.

After the UN Trust Fund ceremony, the Special Representative of the Secretary General Klein will meet in the Prijedor Town Hall at 1115 hours with representatives of the Bosniak returnee community in the region.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General will also meet with the Serb Returnee Association and local officials in Sanski Most. These meetings will be available to the media and we will be issuing media advisory later on today to give you further details.

The deadline for applications for the next class of the Republika Srpska Police Academy is 30 June.

We expect this class to have approximately 120 cadets, as usual priority will be given to Displaced Persons and women.

The testing for this class will be held from 2 to 14 of September and the class will begin October 7. Anyone interested should pick up their applications at any IPTF station in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Major Scott Lundy – SFOR

No statement.