

Ambassador Munro's statement on the "Action Plan" for the City of Mostar

In view of subsequent media coverage regarding the alleged adoption of the "Action Plan" for the City of Mostar, the Deputy High Representative and the Head of OHR (South), Ambassador Colin Munro, would like to repeat his statement at yesterday's press conference in full:

"I should like to clarify the position regarding an Action Plan for the City of Mostar, drafted by some members of the City Council. Contrary to media reports, this plan was not adopted at the meeting of the Council on 24 September. Moreover, the procedures employed to deceive the media and others, into believing that it had been adopted, are unacceptable in a democratic society based on the rule of law. Deception inevitably calls into question the real commitment of those in charge of procedure, both to democracy, and to the plan's many admirable objectives.

Therefore, I expressed my concern to the President of the City Council and a number of his colleagues at a meeting on 25 September. We agreed that the Plan had indeed not been adopted by the Council. It did not commit the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor, or the IC in any way. We agreed also that the deadlines were remote from reality.

We agreed that there should be a meeting next month between me and members of all political parties represented on the City Council to discuss the way forward. I should emphasise that this will not be a meeting of the City Council, as such. At this meeting, I shall explain the position of OHR, and indeed, of the international community more widely, on the substantive proposals which the Plan contains. The procedural proposals regarding the position of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and others in authority will not be discussed at all.

Most of the substantive action points in the Draft Plan have been the subject of intensive effort by the international community, and Mostarians of good will, over several years, who are trying to restore Mostar to what it was before the war – a tolerant, multi-ethnic, prosperous, urban community. I fully share the frustration and disappointment of the authors of the Draft Plan that, more than seven years after the Washington Agreement, nearly six years after the Dayton Agreement, and despite enormous material effort by the EU and other benefactors, the city should still be, fundamentally, divided. Most of the points in the Draft Plan are relevant to overcoming the division of the city.

But it is important to be realistic. Not only are politics the art of the possible. Success depends on trust and cooperation which has been sadly lacking in this case. In the period ahead, I see the greatest potential for progress in rapid moves to unify the emergency services so that, for example, the ambulance nearest to an emergency, responds to the emergency call. Similar considerations apply to the fire service, and of course, to the police. In this connection, I wish to pay tribute to the reintegration that has already taken place. I also see an urgent need and, indeed, an opportunity to press ahead with the establishment of an integrated rubbish collection and disposal service using facilities paid for by the European Union.

The IC is working intensively on efforts to align legislation governing the City, the Canton, and the Federation, to ensure that they are in harmony with each other. I hope to have news for you soon about plans to reestablish the Grammar School as a centre of educational excellence with common curricula, open to all capable of benefiting from this level of education, regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation.

I conclude with an appeal to all those who hold elected responsibility in this city to devote more attention in the period ahead to resolving real material problems, common to all Mostarians, and less to political stratagems which can only set back the objectives of economic and social development, political stability, and, of course, reintegration".