

Joint Press Conference OHR, OSCE, SFOR, UNMBiH and UNHCR

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Simon Haselock, OHR: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. If we could just settle down for a second, the routine for this morning is that there will be some short opening remarks from the High Representative and the other principals. Afterwards, there will be a short amount of time available for questions. I will then ask you to remain in your seats as the principals leave, and then there are some journalists I understand from the Republika Srpska who will have some opportunity for some discussions later. Thank you.

Ambassador Carlos Westendorp, OHR: Good morning. Thank you for coming. It's a pleasure to join you in these new CPIC facilities. Today marks the second anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. It is fitting that this second anniversary should be marked by the third round of elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina in less than a year.

Free and fair elections lay the basis for legitimate, democratic government. The municipal elections held in September were a very positive step towards real democracy. We are confident that this weekend's elections in Republika Srpska will reinforce the trend towards pluralism in Bosnia.

It is of crucial importance that all the citizens of Republika Srpska should vote in this weekend's elections. Violence, however, has no place in the democratic process.

Recent incidents of harassment in Bijeljina are a cause of serious concern to us. I want to emphasize strongly to the RS authorities that both campaigning and voting must be conducted without threats, inflammatory propaganda or harassment of any kind.

As we take stock of our achievements in the two years since Dayton was agreed, I want to underline that there has been real progress in implementing peace and stability.

Fundamental institutional and legal reforms are underway, in particular the creation and functioning of the Common Institutions, with notable recent progress in the Parliamentary Assembly proceedings.

The Bosnian economy is growing stronger. However, the Quick Start Package of measures dealing with essential economic reforms, has been adopted but not implemented.

But the list of achievements of the last two years could have been much longer. Reluctance by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to cooperate fully, has prevented progress on many aspects of the construction of a civil and democratic society.

In the run up to the December meeting of the Peace Implementation Council in Bonn, we find ourselves at an important crossroads of the Dayton Peace Process. There are serious blockages in the implementation of Dayton. The Bonn meeting must provide guidance on how the blockages can be overcome.

The functions and resources of my office will be looked at closely during the Bonn meeting. In particular I want to use the Bonn meeting to ensure backing for full interpretation of the powers accorded to me under the Dayton Peace Agreement, which gives the High Representative the right and obligation to "ensure the cooperation of the parties as the High Representative judges necessary".

Other crucial issues will also be debated at Bonn. Efficient management of the economy. A clamp down on corruption. The re-structuring of the media landscape of Bosnia Herzegovina. What sort of new impetus can be given to refugee return issues. You are all aware that there is much to be done in the forthcoming months. However, any talk of partition or secession in Bosnia must be rejected. The Dayton Agreement is the basis for our work, and Dayton is the only way forward. Thank you.

Ambassador Robert Frowick, OSCE: I'd like to make some comments on behalf of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Two years ago today some of us from OSCE were participating in a task force in Vienna when we got word that an agreement had been reached on the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was an extremely exciting moment, as you may remember, even down to the last minute, it wasn't clear whether that agreement would be reached. We found that we were asked to take on three tasks. First, to supervise the preparation and conduct of elections. That's the issue that seems to always get the most attention in our case, but we also have other important tasks: active democratization initiatives, human rights monitoring and reporting, and regional stabilization responsibilities that relate to implementing confidence and security building measures and arms reductions.

I would like to trace briefly what we have done in response to those tasks assigned to us, and point out at the outset that this mission was a pioneering effort. There had never been anything like this in the history of the OSCE in magnitude, scope, depth, whatever. Four of us arrived on the ground here in Sarajevo in the later part of December. Within six months we built up a mission of 400 officers and about 400 local hire with a Head Office here and offices throughout the entire country.

With regard to the elections, we were asked to supervise the preparation and conduct at seven levels of elections, from municipalities, through cantons, through all of the higher levels of legislative and executive bodies within the Federation, the Republika Srpska, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. By now, we have achieved all of those elections. They were difficult, as you well know. I said that this was probably the most complex electoral process ever, but somehow we got through them. Nobody was hurt, there was no marching in the streets in Sarajevo or anywhere else. People have accepted those results, moved forward, we had public opinion polls indicating that 85% of the population throughout the country believe those elections reflect the will of the people. Not only have we achieved the seven levels of elections asked of us, but we're now going forward, as the High Representative just said, for Republika Srpska Assembly Elections tomorrow and on Sunday, which can offer further chance for progress towards democratization in this country.

On our democratization and human rights efforts, we've built up a great range of proactive initiatives, and I think we've developed certainly one of, if not the strongest, human rights monitoring and reporting programs in the entire country; at least I have had nothing but universal comments of respect for what has been done.

On regional stabilization, we have very early on reached an agreement, on January 26th, 1996, on the Confidence and Security Building Measures Program. All of those measures have been implemented. At the 14 June 1996 Florence meeting, an agreement was reached on the sub-regional arms limitation regime, and all of the goals have been achieved under that regime. They will be spelled out later today by General Eide in Vienna by chance. I think that's a major development, because you will find a large number of weapons have been destroyed in the OSCE effort to contribute towards a stable balance in this region at a lower threshold of power.

While we recognize that there are many, many problems still facing us, we confront daily human rights difficulties, there's a long way to go. It seems to me at this stage, as far as OSCE is concerned, I believe the mission has done its share to help create here a new political situation in the country that's more in the direction of, shall we say, of the people, by the people, and for the people. Thank you.

Lieutenant General Philippe Mansuy, DCOMSFOR: May I say that I'm very pleased to be here on this stage two years after the signature of Dayton to publicly testify to the SFOR solidarity with the other international organizations, and to express once more SFOR's determination to implement Dayton. May I remind you, what is SFOR's mission? SFOR's mission is first to implement the provisions of Annex 1A of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Second, to provide support and assistance to the other international agencies and organizations within SFOR capabilities.

Until now, obviously, we can say that SFOR has been fully successful in implementing all military provisions of Dayton. There still remains some work, of course, but basically, we have been successful in the first part of our mission.

As for the second, I may say here that in the past three months, SFOR has made a particular effort to assist, to support, the international organizations in their own missions. With respect to that, I can say that SFOR has been successful. We will continue the same way in full solidarity with the others and OHR at our side. Thank you.

Ambassador Kai Eide, UNMIBH: Thank you very much. I also take great pleasure in being here on this day, as the others have pointed out. Two years after Dayton, there's no doubt that significant progress has been made. First of all, there is peace, and that is of course the most important. Second, there has been democratic elections, the establishment of joint institutions, the start of refugee return...all of which are examples that we are heading in the right direction, although, too slowly. Economic reconstruction is on the way, and I must say, walking around in the surroundings of Sarajevo or elsewhere, there's nothing that gives me as much pleasure as the sound of cement blenders which you hear everywhere. That is a positive sign.

For the United Nations, the main pillar of our work is of course the United Nations International Police Task Force. It is the most ambitious police task force ever established. From our perspective, I think I may say that without any exaggeration, that in 1997, we have achieved a breakthrough. In the Federation, a joint police is being formed. Since September, we have also been able to start police reform in the RS. Altogether, today, more than 7,000 police officers have gone through our training, 2,000 of them in the RS. Everyday, new police officers are coming to us asking us to become part of our training program. That is, to me, significant progress.

What are we trying to achieve? Of course, to ensure that each and every citizen in Bosnia-Herzegovina will have a democratic police that serves the public without discrimination, and which is not an instrument of individual politicians, or political parties. The most important is to see that human rights are being respected without regard to ethnic or religious belongings. But, there is a much wider perspective that we must not forget. This country has a great potential, in spite of devastation caused by the war. It has a well educated population, it has natural resources, it has natural beauty. All this must and can benefit the population, but to create prosperity and overcome the poverty and misery which we can still see all across the country, these human and natural resources must be exploited. This can only happen if individuals with various ethnic belonging are able to come together across entity lines, across ethnic lines, without fear and harassment. It can only happen if they can pull their knowledge across those lines. It can only happen if natural resources can be exploited in cooperation across entity and ethnic lines. It can only happen if investors and tourists can come here and work here in a stable and secure environment. For all this, we need a police which is efficient, modern, and can fight crime and corruption. But, we also need a police which is fair and without discrimination. We need a court system which is also fair and that are servers of the public. These are preconditions for the respect of human rights, but are also preconditions for prosperity in this country, and they are preconditions for this country joining the family of European nations where it must take its rightful place and where it belongs.

To continue this work will be our priority as we enter the third year of Dayton. The reform of the police service will continue. We have achieved a momentum. It must be maintained. We must expand and include in our work the judiciary, the courts, to see to it that we are fair; courts without discrimination, and together with the reformed police and reformed courts, we must fight against corruption.

The UN is here to work with the authorities who want to cooperation with us. We are here to work for the population; each man and woman. If we succeed, then the people of Bosnia will succeed in terms of human rights, respect of the individual, and prosperity. If we fail, then I think the people of Bosnia will fail. Therefore, we must work together to make sure that we do succeed. Thank you.

Pierre-Francois Pirlot, UNHCR: The UNHCR High Commissioner, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, was here in one of her many visits to Bosnia, and she's been here for three days. Yesterday, she said that she wanted to walk in downtown Sarajevo. She came back to the office shocked; positively shocked. She could not believe the progress that has been achieved.

The progress that has been, if we measure it by the terms of the Annex 7, which is the one that we are responsible for, 400,000 people by in large, have returned since the signature of the Dayton Agreement. That is certainly a measure of the progress that has been achieved too. People felt confident that they could come back.

One may argue also that's a measure of what remains to be done, and it's true. We must realize that as far as returns, the easy part has just happened. What remains ahead of us is the most difficult one, what we call the minority returns. That will require, on the part of the international community and on the part of the UNHCR, possibly a new approach, a more proactive approach, in negotiating, mediating, brokering agreements...but the signs are there, and the signs are there everywhere, not only in one entity, but in both entities, you can see that things are changing and there are opportunities. That must be exploited. We must bring that to fruition.

Obviously, return is neither a simple logistics operation, nor a question of statistics. It depends on a variety of

factors, and the fact that we are all here today is a sign of all these many factors. There are political factors, but there are also social economic factors that condition the return of people. But, '98 must be the year of return, and if we indeed do work with the same common objective of by in large bringing reconciliation to the country, I think that '98 could also be a year of great achievement.

Simon Haselock, OHR:If I could ask for questions now, but if you could just state your name and your organization, and who the question is directed at, I would be grateful.

(Dan Deluce - Reuters) Q:There's been a tremendous amount of diplomatic and other type of resources devoted to the political situation in the Republika Srpska. There's been a lot of support expressed on this stage for President Plavsic, and a lot of criticism directed at Pale as perhaps the main obstacle to implementing the Peace Agreement. What happens if this election this weekend goes badly as far as the international community is concerned? What if the SDS and the radicals win a majority? What's the strategy after that?

Carlos Westendorp, OHR:To whom did you address the...

(Dan Deluce - Reuters) Q:Why don't we start with the United Nations, the High Representative and the OSCE...

(*Laughter*)

Kai Eide, UNMIBH:When I get those kinds of questions, I always regret that I forgot my crystal ball, because if I had it I would be able to answer it much better than I will today.

I think the best thing would be to look at the strategy when we know where we are, and not speculate into the future that we do not know. I presume that is the answer that you expected. Thank you.

Carlos Westendorp, OHR:The simple fact of having elections is good news. I am convinced what any country who wants to become a normal country and among nations with the same stock is to have elections...as many as possible.

The country's not organizing elections for obtaining determined results. This is a problem of political parties. For us, the international community, elections in themselves are good. Of course, there have been problems coming from the present government in Pale, especially in preventing Dayton. They have the wrong perspective. They are not serving their population properly; the real interests of the population, which is to cooperate with the international community, because the interests of the international community is that the country is prosperous and is democratic. I hope that with a beginning of freer media in Republika Srpska, and after that, all over the country, these elections would be better than last year's elections, but certainly less good than next year's elections.

Robert Frowick, OSCE:From the beginning, when we entered into this internal political crisis in Republika Srpska, we realized that there were risks involved and opportunities involved, and that's the way it is in political life. It seemed to OSCE that these were risks worth taking; that there is an opportunity here to advance. Our view is that the people of the country, including throughout Republika Srpska, are no doubt sick and tired of war and extremist policy. I think that the people realize that there is a chance here for change. The changes that are taking place so far, generally, in the political process and specifically though elections, have been to erode, in my view, gradually at least, the authority and the power of the ultra-nationalist elements.

Already last year, when the first post-war National Assembly was elected, it was one of the most remarkable developments of the year, that 18 of the 83 Assembly members were from the other side of the IEHL representing Bosniaks and Croats who wanted to express a desire to come back to live where they used to in Republika Srpska. We've moved further. This year in the Municipal Elections, the extremist elements have lost ground. These are the last year's results.

It seemed to me that there were reasons for moving with a certain amount of confidence. We will respect the will of the people. The main point here is that the people of the Republika Srpska have an opportunity to decide in secret, under international supervision, what they want for their future. We'll see what they decide and we will honor it. I don't see any difference in strategy from what we're doing up to now, which is basically take the Dayton concept as our strategy and drive it forward.

Kai Eide, UNMIBH:Can I just say...having looked into my crystal ball now for a little while.

We're entering into the third year of Dayton, there's really one message that I would like to get across, not to the leaders here, but to all those leaders who come and visit Bosnia-Herzegovina. Do not only visit the established leaders. Pay attention to opposition forces, to moderate forces, to human rights organizations. Give them the moral support that going to see them means. Give them the confidence and competence, because encouraged political parties can work, and political forces can work across ethnic lines. If we do not succeed in building a more normal political party structure before the elections in 1998, then we will be in a very difficult situation. Then, I'm afraid peace will not be self sustained as we all wish. Thank you.

(Amra Kebo - Oslobodjenje) Q:Mr. Westendorp, you said that reluctant authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina to cooperate fully slow down the process. Can you please tell which authorities were more, and which were less cooperative in implementing Dayton?

Carlos Westendorp, OHR:Well, it depends on the issues, of course. As a whole, I believe that the main blockage comes from the Serb members of the Presidency or the Council of Ministers. But, there are also problems coming from the Federation side. In any case, what is important is that all of them cooperate in the benefit of the country; in the benefit of the country as a whole and the benefit of the entities.

The path, as Ambassador Eide said, of implementation of Dayton, is going on well but is going on too slowly. This year of '98 is crucial. These blockages have to be overcome. You all know that the High Representative has a mandate of implementing Dayton and the possibility of interpreting its capabilities in accordance to Dayton. I am ready and willingly disposed to use these capabilities in the coming days and coming weeks to speed up the process.

(Zinaida Babovic - Radio Free Europe) Q:For Ambassador Frowick regarding Municipal Election results, two questions; first one, can you say exactly, using numbers, if it is possible, how many municipal councils were formed and how many are left to be?

Robert Frowick, OSCE:114 and 22.

(Zinaida Babovic - Radio Free Europe) Q:That's the first time we heard that in figures. Secondly, can you tell us more specifically which problems are you facing in those disputable municipalities?

Robert Frowick, OSCE:Yes, there is a certain pattern it seems to me based on our field trips, for example, to places like Srebrenica and Bosanski Brod and Drvar, particularly sensitive areas of strategic significance where people who used to live there are trying to come back. The pattern involved preemptive actions by those who are in charge coming out of the war, who sometimes want to hold the inaugural session without the other present. The OSCE takes the position that this is not acceptable, not recognizable, because there has to be at least one representative of each of the winning parties present.

Another development that we've noted is that sometimes there's an effort to preempt through the passage through the basic rules of procedure, for the Municipal Assembly without others present.

A third is that in many of these places there's a predilection to issue lists of war criminals, perceived war criminals, from the local battles that took place. But, we have to vet such lists through the rules of the road procedure agreed last year. There has to be some kind of judgment brought into the matter from the Hague Tribunal. These are the kinds of things that we're finding that are obstructing the process, but I would note that by saying 114 assemblies have met out of the 136 municipalities, it gets across, it seems to me, that throughout the country, generally, we have moved forward quite some distance and quite satisfactorily. We always seem to have 10 or 12 communities where we have all the problems.

(Lee Hockstader - Washington Post) Q:A question for SFOR; General, do you believe that the failure to apprehend the Serb war crime suspects who have been indicted in the Hague is stalling or slowing progress on the implementation of Dayton? If so, do you believe that SFOR has any obligation to apprehend these suspects?

Philippe Mansuy, SFOR: That's a good question.

(*Laughter*)

First, I would like to remind everybody here that the parties themselves have signed the GFAP, and thus, they agreed to turnover the persons indicted as war criminals. In fact, this is the first duty of all

the parties; to turnover, arrest, the war indicted criminals. It's not a SFOR mandate, as you know. Obviously, we, SFOR, and NATO are continuing to insist that the parties take all possible steps to ensure that all suspects are arrested.

For the moment, SFOR, as you know, has only the mission to detain people they meet in the framework of their duty.

(Lee Hockstader - Washington Post) Q:If I could follow up, first, you did not answer the first part of my question, which was do you believe that the failure to apprehend these war crime suspects is slowing progress and the implementation of Dayton.

The follow up to your answer is, you say that SFOR will apprehend war crime suspects if you encounter them during the ordinary course of your routine mission. In face, is that and has that been the policy and has that policy been pursued?

Philippe Mansuy, SFOR: I think the first part of your question was not related to SFOR. I think SFOR is not that well placed to answer the first part of your question.

But to follow up, I think that SFOR are prepared to devote our best to assist the international organizations in pursuing all indicted war criminals, if possible, of course, to take action. But, if only in the general framework of the action of the international organizations, because as you know, this is a very sensitive issue and we have to be in general harmony on that issue.

Carlos Westendorp, OHR:May I answer the first part of the question?

We firmly believe that as long as criminals against humanity, I wouldn't use the term war criminals...criminals against humanity, in war time, are at large, there is not going to be a normal life in this country, not only for ethnic reasons of rule of law reasons, but also because of the influence in politics and economy in the country. They are contaminating the atmosphere of the country. They have to go to the Hague.

There are three possibilities. The first best is that they go voluntarily as 10 Croats have done recently. Of course, the second best is that the entities who have the obligations of delivering them to the Hague, do it. The third best, which is equivalent to say the worst one, is to take them by force. In any case, they have to go to the Hague.

(Lee Hockstader - Washington Post) Q:Mr. Westendorp, do you think SFOR has been living up to its policy of...(indiscernible)?

Carlos Westendorp, OHR:I think SFOR has done what SFOR should do within their mandate, which has two parts. One is that they have the obligation to do it when they come across them. The second part is when circumstances so permit.

Robert Frowick, OSCE:May I just add a comment?

First of all, OSCE strongly endorses what the High Representative just said. We would note that there have been some developments, for example, in Prijedor, where in one case someone resisted arrest and was killed in the incident. The other case, the person was taken to the Hague. Also, someone was apprehended in Eastern Slavonia. There has been progress there. I thought that the move of the 10 on the Croats side led by Dario Kordic was a major development. Some progress has been made, but until this matter is settled and until specifically Radovan Karadzic is brought to justice, we are going to continue to be facing greater resistance to the Dayton Peace Agreement than we will have after those people are apprehended. I am absolutely convinced of that. That is something that must be done.

Kai Eide, UNMIBH:And I agree with everything that has been said by the others.

Let me just add two considerations to this. The first is that I agree with what Bob Frowick said about the 10 Croats. I wish the same could happen on the Serb side. I must say also that before or until the alleged war criminals are brought to the Hague, there will be the impression of collective guilt resting on an entire people, which is unfair and incorrect, visa vie, the individual innocent, man and woman, of that nation. Therefore, it is very, very important that this collective guilt be removed, and it can only be removed if the alleged war criminals are brought to trial. That is one important aspect.

The other important aspect is there is a situation today on the Serb side where the average income is around 40 or 50 German marks a month. There is no doubt that the fact that some alleged war criminals remain at large affected the donor community, which means it affects the prosperity of each man and woman on that side. So, of course it is important. Thank you.

(Doug Lansky - Tribunal Media Services) Q: I just came from the Tourist Information Office where in the last year, you've had 1,000 tourists, roughly three a day. Is Sarajevo and the surrounds ready for tourism? If so, are you going to make any additional effort to attract more?

Kai Eide, UNMIBH: We are making efforts to that effect everyday by trying to bring peace and stability to this country.

Robert Frowick, OSCE: I question the figures because we must have far more tourists than that just coming to visit us in the OSCE.

(*Laughter*)

(Vedran Persic - OBN) Q: This one goes to the High Representative. What other follow ups have been given to the CAFAO reports and to the two week deadline you gave to the authorities?

Carlos Westendorp, OHR: As you know, they were two different reports; one of fraud and customs, and another on using old structures for specific purposes. Both of them have been answered positively by the Federation Minister, Mr. Bilandzija. As far as the DDDR affair, the positive answer comes also from Minister Silajdic and Minister Kurtovic. Both of them assured me that they will deliver all the information necessary, and secondly, that the DDDR is going to be dissolved, which is a positive answer and it was the main purpose.

As far as the customs is concerned, actions are going to be taken, both in political and criminal aspects. But, it has to be complimented. It has to be complimented because smuggling and black marketeering is quite important in exports and imports coming from Rome, coming from the neighboring countries; that is to say the Republic of Yugoslavia and Croatia. I have established contact with both countries with both Presidents. I already have a positive answer from President Milosevic. He is very much worried about this and he's willing to cooperate with the international community here in Bosnia to stop this traffic which is really draining money from Republika Srpska and the Republika Srpska population. We have to stop that. We are doing this cooperation hopefully not only with Yugoslavia, but also with Croatia.

(Banja Luka Reporter with interpreter) Q: Recently, there is a story about moving entity lines near Prijedor and Kljuc. According to certain information, a village near Kljuc that is now inside the RS should be given to FBiH, and in return a village between Prijedor and Sanski most that is currently in FBiH should be given to RS. Is this true, and in what measure is this moving of entity lines violating the DPA? What's the object of it?

Robert Frowick, OSCE: I think that's the kind of question that should go to the governmental authorities of the country, but it reminds me of the problems that we had on boundary lines, overcoming problems from split municipalities, and so forth, as we were moving through the registration process for elections this past September, but I don't think any of us would be in a position to respond definitively to that kind of question.

(Banja Luka Reporter with interpreter) Q: Is this violating the DPA, this moving of entity lines?

Carlos Westendorp, OHR: We would have to look at it carefully, yes, but if you would give us the information we may have an answer to that.

Robert Frowick, OSCE: If appropriate authorities want to make changes to the boundary, they've done it from the beginning of the DPA. At first, two years ago, there was a certain map defining the IEBL. It was adjudicated over succeeding months, and there are still certain areas that need some final decisions and I would see that as part of that process.

(Dan Deluce - Reuters) Q: You mentioned the meeting in Bonn coming up in December. There are several basic issues you mentioned which are blocked: the currency, the flag, some very basic issues. What type of action is being considered specifically? There was talk when van den Broek was here about strengthening the powers of the High Representative. Is there a way that the international community could impose solutions when the parties prove unable to agree?

Carlos Westendorp, OHR: There has been a lot of speculation about the expansion of the mandate of the High Representative, going up to say that it should be changed into a protectorate type of mandate, which of course is not the model followed in Dayton and is not the model that I think is going to be suitable for the rest of the period. As we've said, all of us here, there has been progress. The only thing we have to do is speed up this progress. I am convinced that the capabilities of Annex 10 given to the High Representative and the fact that the High Representative much make the authorities to cooperate, give the international community, the High Representative, enough powers to speed up the process by taking interim measures in order to implement the questions which are pending. The ones you mentioned are the most evident ones but there are others. Also, to the possibilities of removing officials or persons occupying public posts which are not cooperating with Dayton. Using this mandate, supported by the Bonn conference, enable us to speed up the process.

Simon Haselock, OHR: Thank you very much. If you would just stay where you are please, I believe the OSCE has some church announcements to make.

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