

Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letter to the Municipal Authorities of Eastern Herzegovina• DHR Bercot met with the Head of Prozor Rama municipality
SFOR	Capt. Magistretti	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement

Avis Benes - OHR:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to today's press conference of SFOR and OHR seated in Mostar. SFOR does not have a special statement today but will be, of course, available for your questions.

On behalf of the OHR, I have two points for you today.

The first one is about the letter, i.e. the message of the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, signed yesterday and sent today to the Mayors of Eastern Herzegovina. In his letter, the High Representative describes his experiences during the visits to the region, highlighting that in all his contacts with the people of the region it was clear "that there are several issues that if properly addressed by the local authorities, with the assistance of the International Community, could make a tangible difference to everyday lives." The High Representative underlines that there is agreement across the International Community on a number of steps that the IC together with the authorities in the region to make a marked improvement in Eastern Herzegovina. In his letter the High Representative highlights; improving cross-border co-operation between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia, improving the municipal administrations and helping the Municipal Mayors open up the region to economic development as the IC's top priorities. The High Representative says: "It is clear to me that we have to stop talking about problems and start taking about solutions. This is why I have decided to assign Anatoly Viktorov, the Deputy Head of my Office in Mostar as the coordinator of the International Community's work in the region. His job will be to co-ordinate our efforts closely with your own, to find real solutions to real problems, and in that context support the development of your region." The High Representative urges the Municipal Mayors "to intensify efforts in economic reform, the rule of law, implementation of property laws, judicial reforms and the fight against our common enemy, corruption and organized crime." He adds that: "We must ensure that Eastern Herzegovina doesn't lag behind the rest of BiH as we move towards Europe. We owe this to the people of Eastern Herzegovina."

Following the letter which the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, sent today, allow me to inform you that the Heads of the Regional Offices of the International Community will meet with the Mayors of the Municipalities in Eastern Herzegovina tomorrow in Trebinje. After the meeting, Mr. Anatoly Viktorov, the IC Co-ordinator for Eastern Herzegovina, and local authority representatives will address representatives of the media. There will be a photo opportunity at the start of the meeting at 1030 hrs, which is taking place in the Youth Centre. The press conference is scheduled for 1200 hrs. You will receive appropriate media advisory early this afternoon but anyway I wanted to give you heads-up.

My second point refers to the activities of the OHR Office here in Mostar. This week, Deputy High Representative and Head of OHR South, Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot, met with Head of Prozor-Rama municipality, Mr. Jozo Vukoja to discuss the situation in this municipality. Ambassador Bercot congratulated municipal authorities for the results this municipality has achieved with regard to returns, as well as implementation of the property laws which is currently at 99% - the highest in the Canton. Moreover, the Ambassador expressed his hope that the positive trend in the field of Education in the Prozor-Rama municipality will continue. Although there are many problems that this municipality faces, it was jointly concluded that the emphasis in municipal work should always be on democratic procedures and rule of law in an atmosphere of tolerance."

That was all on behalf of the OHR.

Questions:

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): Have you finally received the new names for the 3 ministerial positions for the

Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Government? If you have received them, could you please tell us who they are? As you probably know, neither HDZ nor SDA want to make the names public?

A: Avis Benes: On behalf of the OHR, we can officially confirm that we received the names of the candidates for the three Ministerial posts on Friday, 4 July 2003. As far as the names are concerned, it is up to the parties to release their names if they want to. As you are all probably aware, the OHR will declare itself on the names within ten days from the date we received the names, i.e. last Friday.

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): Regarding your statement on Eastern Herzegovina, does it mean that the IC is increasing its focus on this region?

A: Avis Benes: The IC has been present in Eastern Herzegovina all the time. However, it can be said that this is a sort of intensification of efforts and co-operation with the local authorities.

Q: Senad Efica (RTV Mostar): Could you give us any information about the work of the Mostar Commission? Nobody is releasing any information.

A: Avis Benes: I will just reiterate what has been said numerous times so far – all questions regarding the concrete work of the Mostar Commission should be addressed to the Commission. The emphasis and the wishes are that the work is as transparent as possible and that the public is involved in its work as much as possible.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): I had a question for OSCE, but perhaps you could reply. Namely, allegedly an attempt to issue instructions on “two schools under one roof” failed at the last meeting which was held in Sarajevo. As far as I know, it failed because of the representatives of the Herzegovina Neretva Canton. I would like to know who attended this meeting on behalf of the Canton?

A: Avis Benes: What I can tell you with certainty is that the OHR did not attend and you will definitely have to ask the OSCE or to contact the Government itself.