

Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HR visits Belgrade• Update on Bulldozer Legislation
OSCE	Richard Medic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement
SFOR	Capt. Magistretti	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement

Avis Benes - OHR:

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome to yet another press conference of the international organizations based in Mostar.

On behalf of the OHR, we shall have two statements for you today. The first one pertains to the High Representative's visit to Belgrade where he promotes "Alliance against Mafia." This statement will be available in writing.

As you know the High Representative is in Belgrade today where he will be attending the Southeast Europe Co-operation Process Summit this morning, after which BiH will take over the SEECP Chairmanship. Yesterday the High Representative met with Serbia and Montenegro's President, Svetozar Marovic, and Foreign Minister, Goran Svilanovic. The High Representative also yesterday met with new Serbian Prime Minister, Zoran Zivkovic, and the Serbian Minister of Interior, Dusan Mihajlovic. During these meetings the High Representative outlined/will outline a five point plan for developing and strengthening an "Alliance against the Mafia" between BiH and Serbia and Montenegro and also across the region. This five-point plan means:

- Further measures to tighten the noose around criminal and war-criminal support networks;
- Cross-border information sharing between investigative agencies
- Judicial institutional links and information sharing at all levels from Ministries of Justice to individual Prosecutors.
- Harmonising key laws for better cross border co-operation – particularly extradition laws – which will ensure that criminals are brought before the courts

and finally

- Agreements setting up cross border taskforces which would deal with key specific areas of cross border organised crime, including illegal immigration and trafficking, drugs smuggling, stolen vehicles and so on.

Apart from these meetings and his attendance of the Southeast Europe Co-operation Process Summit this morning, he will today be meeting with Greek Foreign Minister, George Papandreou, in Belgrade representing the EU Presidency, and FYROM President, Boris Trajkovski. These are the latest news about activities of the High Representative in Belgrade.

Secondly, I'll say something about the economic legislation, precisely the Bulldozer Process which is now approaching its final stage. It is expected that the 50 reforms drawn up by BiH businesspeople with a view to stimulating investment and creating more jobs will be on the statute books soon. You can find a comprehensive list of Bulldozer Committee's original proposals on the table here. Working groups, in which Bulldozer Committee

members have participated, have been formed in all of the relevant government ministries to scrutinise individual reforms and formulate responses, either accepting the reforms as they stand or proposing modifications that do not undermine the original intent of the proposal. This process has been detailed and thorough, and there have been instances where the Working Groups have actually gone further than the Bulldozer proposals. The BiH Council of Ministers are expected to have adopted a total of 13 reforms by Thursday's regular CoM Session. As already announced, at its extraordinary session held this week the Federation Government adopted 25 out of 28 reforms. OHR anticipates that the remaining three reforms will be adopted soon. At yesterday's extraordinary session, the RS Government adopted 18 out of 19 reforms and the Office of the High Representative welcomes this development. The one outstanding reform which was NOT passed by the RS government yesterday concerns the end of the monopoly of the Geodetic Administration in the RS, which would open up the land-survey market to local entrepreneurs. This is an important reform and we hope that at Thursday's session of the RS government it will be adopted. The Brcko District Assembly has already debated and passed six reforms. 150-day target which the Bulldozer Committee set itself to implement the reforms expires on the 12 April. However, there was a ten-day delay – so the deadline to which those engaged in the process are working is 22 April.

That's all on behalf of the OHR. As far as I know, my colleagues from OSCE and SFOR do not have special statements for today. Of course, we are all available for any question that you might have.

Questions:

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): Over the last couple of days we received a number of phone calls from so-called ordinary people who complained about not having access to the land-registry office. We did not take them seriously. However, this morning we received a phone call from one of the municipalities from so-called east Mostar, I would not like to specify which one, informing us that they had an intention to start a project on the reconstruction of a building but they did not have access to the land-registry office and thus could not get the necessary papers. If this is the case when will this problem be resolved?

A: Avis Benes: At this point of time, the OHR does not have any information about that problem or at least I am not familiar with its existence. I shall make necessary inquiries in order to see to what extent this represents a problem.

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): I have an additional question regarding the formation of C7 Government. What is your latest information regarding the Government's formation? Six months have passed since the elections were held. I think they have broken all deadlines. At the HDZ Coalition press conference, blame was put on SDA and SDA put the blame on them; furthermore, SDA said that everything has been agreed upon at the highest level but that Colak allegedly cannot implement it in the field.

A: Avis Benes: According to our information, neither the latest meeting between SDA and HDZ was fruitful nor did it bring a constructive solution. We can say that the OHR is really disappointed with the fact that formation of the Cantonal Government, which is indeed urgent and necessary, could not have been agreed upon this time either. Also, OHR is of the opinion that it is really irresponsible from politicians that citizens of this Canton suffer for such a long period of time because of their incapability to find a solution.

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): Will you take any measures?

A: Avis Benes: I can tell you that as far as the OHR actions are concerned, the OHR is very closely monitoring this process. We can assist, however, at this point of time the OHR is of the opinion that political parties should be the ones to take full responsibility for this process. In the end this is what they struggled for at the elections – capability to form bodies of authority.

Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA): Avis, I would like to ask if the International Community, specifically your Office, has any expectations from Bosnia and Herzegovina during its chairmanship over the SEECF? The reason for which I posed this question is the fact that it is obvious that the key institutions in BiH are still incapable. It is either not known what they think or they do not think at all, which they demonstrated in the cases of Srebrenica and Iraq.

A: Avis Benes: All together, there is more than enough room for improvement on that matter. One of the things

regarding the chairmanship over the SEECF is actually expectation that BiH will also be a leading factor in this project of Alliance against Mafia.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): I would like to refer again to Government formation. The issue of parallels between this and Central Bosnia Canton is being raised again and again. Allegedly, SDA has made certain concessions to HDZ in Central Bosnia Canton and the same is now expected here. I learned from Mr. Miroslav Coric that SDA asked for a ministerial position that belongs to the category of 'Others'. Do you know what the main point of disagreement between these two political parties is?

A: Avis Benes: First of all, the OHR does not want to get into details of inter-parties agreements which might have existed or not existed between the HDZ and SDA. As for issues and points of disagreements, I think it is up to the SDA and HDZ to present them to you. However, whatever the disagreements are, the OHR is of the opinion that it is highly irresponsible that they have lasted for this long and such a behaviour demonstrates a low level of political responsibility.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): Trade Unions from both parts of Mostar addressed a letter to the OHR asking from you to do something. Half of the year has passed and nothing has been done. Does it mean that we will have to wait for another half year for the OHR to do something?

A: Avis Benes: Let me reiterate once again – the OHR is neither passive nor it will be passive in this process. However, it cannot be expected that whenever there is an incapability to find a solution that everything will be just forwarded to the OHR for resolution.

Q: Faruk Kajtaz (Youth Radio X): Avis, were any steps regarding the establishment of the Commission on Mostar reorganisation made, particularly in light of Ambassador Bond's statement?

A: Avis Benes: As for the support to the establishment of this Commission, it can be said that the support from the side of both the authorities and the International Community fully exist. According to our knowledge, certain steps have been taken. However, when it comes to details I would like to refer you to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor as they are the ones responsible for leadership of this process.

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): I have a question for OSCE. Tina mentioned Trade Unions. As we saw yesterday, Education Trade Unions from both parts of Mostar held a warning strike and announced a possibility of a general strike. Taking into consideration that the OSCE is in charge of education, that we had a long strike before and that a school year might be in danger, I would like to ask if OSCE or anybody else will do something, will somebody be held accountable for such a situation? Who will the Trade Union negotiate with, since this Government is working under a technical mandate?

A: Richard Medic: I can say that the OSCE is facing the same problem the Trade Unions are facing, and that is the fact that we have no new Government we can speak to about it. OSCE joins the OHR in calling for the Government to be formed as soon as possible, for the various political parties to stop shuttling responsibility to one another and actually come to an agreement. And I think it is only after this happens that we can expect further progress to be made with the Trade Unions – and education reform in general – within this Canton.

A: Avis Benes: If I may add – OHR fully supports the OSCE statement. However, in general let me remind you that the OHR does not support a position that while expecting formation of a new Government and having a Government in a technical mandate, all decision-making processes, actions and activities should be halted. After all, for their 'technical governing' they technically receive salaries.