

## Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

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OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Meeting of the Indirect Tax Policy Commission</li> <li>• IC Reacts to 'Elektroprivreda RS' Audit Findings</li> <li>• CIPS Project</li> <li>• OHR welcomes commitment of Federation Government to fully implement the law on FBIH Ministries</li> <li>• OHR disappointed over HNC Assembly failure to adopt HNC HIF Statute</li> </ul>
OSCE	Richard Medic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and Modernisation - integration does not mean assimilation</li> </ul>
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### **Avis Benes - OHR:**

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

We are glad that Mr. Jon Oskar Solnes, EUPM Spokesperson, is today with us. He will have a statement for you later on as we shall speak in the usual sequence.

On behalf of the OHR you saw various media advisories and press releases here. I shall remind you of a very active day for the OHR in terms of activities regarding the economic reforms.

As you can see, The Indirect Tax Policy Commission, established by the High Representative two weeks ago, will hold its first meeting today in Sarajevo and will address the media at 16.00 hrs.

Secondly, the Bulldozer Commission, which was also established by our organization, for removal of unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles, which are preventing development of entrepreneurship, had a meeting yesterday. These are all reminders for you as these media advisories were released late last night.

I also believe that you all have noticed an information about the audit that was released yesterday regarding Elektroprivreda RS. The International Community officials had a meeting about it last night and today they are going to address the public at 1630 hrs in order to present a reaction of the International Community to the audit results. What is not included in this press release is the fact that as far as audits of other Elektroprivreda companies in BIH are concerned, they will be made public very soon. As for Elektroprivreda Herceg Bosna we can already announce that it will be released next week and for the Elektroprivreda BIH a week after.

Once again, I would like to draw your attention to the press release we prepared for you regarding the CIPS project which has been in focus of attention recently, and graphics which speak about certain issues with regard to which some misinformation appeared in public.

There have been many complaints about the price. It is known that prices of the old ID cards were actually much higher. The price was not the same in all Cantons; for instance in Herzegovina Neretva Canton, the price of ID card was 130% higher than this one. Also, on the basis of your own experience you all know that the old ID card was more expensive, it was made with poorer technology, easier to be forged and below any European standard which is not the case with this one. Also, when you make a comparison to the price in other countries in the region, this

is still the cheapest ID card. There is also a graph demonstrating that. The price in Croatia is 90% higher than this one, in Slovenia 200% higher, etc. If you are interested in details as to how the costs are exactly divided here is the contract with Siemens and budget breakdown.

Even though there was a lot of misunderstandings and confusion about this project I have to emphasise that the High Representative said that he did not believe that any responsible politician in BiH wants this project to fail. Should you have any further questions or require some additional information you can ask me afterwards and therefore I think there is no need to read out this whole press release. I hope you will read it.

Two more issues on behalf of the OHR.

Firstly, OHR welcomes the formation of the new Federation Government and it is encouraged by its commitment expressed for the first time by Federation Government to insure conditions that five Federal ministries start functioning in Mostar in line with the Law on FBiH Ministries (Article 30) and the Dayton Agreement. Ministries have to be operational in Mostar full-time, not part-time as it was previously the case. To remind, these 5 ministries are Federation Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Traffic and Communications, Ministry of Energy, Mining and Industry, Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Culture and Sports.

Second item refers to the yesterday's session of the Herzegovina Neretva Canton Assembly. We have to say that the OHR South is truly disappointed that the Statute of the HNC Health Insurance Fund, which has been unanimously adopted at the HNC HIF Management Board, which consists of both Croat and Bosniak representatives, was not approved by the HNC Assembly yesterday, as we have expected. This is even more so because the process of health reforms in the past few months had the pace of positive developments and since it is a high time that unification of the Health Insurance Fund is brought to its finalisation. OHR believes that yesterday's stalling of the process on the side of Club of Bosniak councilors represents clear political obstruction and support to parallelisms which in no way can serve interests of all citizens of this Canton.

This is all I have on behalf of the OHR. Now, I give the floor to Richard and OSCE.

#### **Richard Medic - OSCE**

One point from the OSCE today.

Head of the OSCE Education Department, Dr. Falk Pingle, was in Mostar yesterday to participate in a television show and interviews with local media. This visit to Herzegovina gave Dr. Pingle an opportunity to further clarify to the public OSCE's role in the education reform process, and to address some key issues particularly relevant to this region. Dr. Pingle emphasised that OSCE's role in the reform of education can be described in three words: facilitating, co-ordinating and monitoring. This includes providing support to the working groups, encouraging engagement of local stakeholders, monitoring developments in the field, and providing political support where possible. 'We are not here to take over the role of the BiH authorities. They are ultimately responsible for education in BiH,' Dr. Pingle said. Commenting on the problems associated with BiH's currently fragmented education structures, Dr. Pingle stressed that integration does not mean assimilation. 'The reforms are addressing the problems of an expensive and wasteful education system while promoting understanding and respect for different national identities', Dr. Pingle said. The television show, entitled 'Education and Modernisation - two issues under the same roof', will be broadcast at 9pm on Friday evening on HTV Mostar, HTV Mostar OSCAR C, and RTV Mostar.

That is all from the OSCE today. Thank you.

#### **Avis Benes - OHR:**

Thank you Richard. Now, I give the floor to Jon Oskar and the EUPM.

#### **Jon-Oskar Solnes - EUPM**

Good morning. I am pleased to be here to address you on behalf of the EUPM for the first time in Mostar. As you probably all know, the EUPM commenced its mandate on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003 and has been deployed in 43 regional places in BiH. We are slowly getting up to 100% operational capability. The police officers are in place, but I am still looking for a press officer who is coming on Monday. That press officer you will get to know very well because we intend to have a permanent presence here at the press conferences.

Let me take this opportunity and say a few words about the organization of the EUPM. As you know, the EUPM is a follow on mission to the IPTF but it is not the same mission as the IPTF. It is a different mission. When we came here on January 1<sup>st</sup> all police officers who are working in BIH have been certified. So we will not be looking into the every police officers work in BIH. We are mostly concerned about how the BIH police is managed. That does not mean that we do not care about how the police officers on the ground are working. But the police chiefs and managers at the higher level are responsible for the police officers on the ground. The mechanism is this: if the police officers on the ground are not doing their jobs in a proper manner then the police chiefs will have to take action. If the police chiefs do not take action, with the internal control and check out police officers, we have the ability to remove them. Because we are not looking into every police officer in BIH but primarily concentrating on police chiefs and managers. We think that 500 EUPM police officers are more than enough. These are all expert police officers with a great experience in Europe. I will not explain everything about the EUPM and try to catch up 6 weeks of press conferences now, but I have some papers to distribute after the press conference. I want to discuss a bit about the goals of the EUPM. The EU Commissioner [...] that the two key concerns are security of returnees and fight against organised crime. These are also the things that you the media will be mostly interested in. But there is a lot more to the law enforcement than only these two issues. We are looking at the law enforcement in BIH as a whole package. I have here the list of seven key programmes that we want to achieve. I will distribute them after the meeting. But I would like to highlight things like the internal affairs programme. This is the programme advising the BIH police on how to conduct internal control against police officers. Because we say in our mandate that within three years we want to bring the BIH police up to the European standards. When we talk about the European standards we are talking about technical capability and operational capability. The key issue in defining European standards is the transparency in the work of the police. So the internal control, process within the BIH police is of the great importance to the EUPM. And already in Canton 4 we have started or the BIH police has started under the monitoring of the EUPM an internal control procedure against the high ranking police officers.

I will just say a few words about the mechanisms. Local citizen can go to a local police and make a complaint. The local police have to give the EUPM a copy of that complaint. The EUPM will see that the complaint is assessed, investigated, and process is brought to a conclusion. And I hope you will tell this to your local citizens so that they can go to the local police and make a complaint if they see something that is wrong.

Now, to bring you up to date on the case of Interex in Sarajevo which you may have heard about. As you know, key thing in bringing the BIH police efficiency up to another level is the information sharing and co-operation between cantons and between entities. We have seen this in the last two days where the police has co-operated very closely between Sarajevo and Mostar. This has led to the two suspects in the robbery Interex are now in custody in Mostar and one is in custody in Sarajevo. I would, of course, like to tell the media more details but I cannot because of operational procedures. I want to say that the investigation is going on very, very well at the moment.

I have a third item for you today. I am only the Spokesperson but we have the Commissioner here in Mostar. So I think it will be more interesting maybe for you to ask him about the EUPM later today. He is discussing with the Minister of Interior and the Police Commissioner here and he is also meeting the Mayor of Mostar and the local police chief. One of things he will discuss is the influence of politicians on police work which is an interesting topic as you know here in Mostar. You will have the opportunity to meet him shortly after 1530 at the City hall in Mostar.

That is all. Thank you.

**Avis Benes - OHR:**

Thank you. Now, Maj. Fix and SFOR.

**Maj. Fix - MNB SE:**

Good morning. This morning I have just one point concerning the media opportunity for next Monday.

Within the framework of periodical transfer of authority, Italian Brigadier General Gian Marco Chiarini will take over the Command from French Brigadier General Bernard Oberto at the head of the Multinational Brigade South-East. Transfer of Authority ceremony will take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2003, in Mostar base - Ortijes at 1100. The ceremony will be chaired by SFOR Commander, Lieutenant General William E. Ward in front of Mr. Bernard Bajolet and Mr. Hans-Jochen Peters, French and German Ambassadors to BIH, Italian high ranking officials, representatives

of international community, French and Italian Army Senior representatives, domicile civilian and military authorities. The transfer marks the end of more than seven years of continuous French command over the Salamander Division, restructured to Brigade on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2003. Media representatives wishing to cover this event are asked to return the attached form before 28 February, 1800 and to arrive at least 30 minutes before the beginning of the ceremony at the main gate of the base.

I would like to conclude with some more personal words. Today is my last press conference in Mostar. I will finish my mandate and leave Bosnia and Herzegovina next Monday with French General Oberto. I would like to thank you all for the quality of our professional relation since October 2002 and I hope that on the whole you recognise me as authorised representative of SFOR and the salamander brigade. I am sorry I am not able to introduce today my replacement because he is arriving tomorrow evening in Mostar. However, next Wednesday you will have the opportunity to meet directly Italian Captain Magistretti. And to conclude, I wish you all of you, your families and your country all the best in the time to come.

#### **Avis Benes - OHR:**

Thank you Maj. Fix. On behalf of my colleagues and the press core we wish you the same. Now, your questions please if there are any.

### **Questions:**

**Q: Zvonimir Jukic (Onasa):** I have a question regarding the CIPS affair because there has been a lot of headlines lately in the media. Even the former Deputy Mayor of Mostar said that he will not accept this kind of ID card. It is clear what the procedure will be for inhabitants of the municipalities but what will happen with inhabitants of the Central Zone? What will be written on their ID Cards?

**A: Avis Benes:** As for the details about the CIPS project you should address either those involved in this project, who are absolutely in charge of the project, or Ministry of Interior of Herzegovina Neretva Canton which is the only authorised body for issuance of ID cards for inhabitants of Mostar municipalities and the Central Zone. As for the case involving Deputy Mayor Tomic we think that the explanation given yesterday by the Ministry of Interior, i.e. press release on this issue, is quite clear. What was written is absolutely in accordance with the positive legal regulations, which are unique for the entire BIH. One should have checked those regulations before the complaint was logged against them. But it's all now a matter of the political domain.

**Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar):** I have two questions for the OHR. You have partly mentioned yesterday's HNC Assembly session. Could you comment on the session in general, on other contents? Point one of the agenda was perhaps the most important - Cantonal Constitution - which is in accordance with the Constitutional changes.

In my second question I would like to refer to the CIPS project from the political aspect. Talks about the possible reorganization of Mostar are underway. If Mostar becomes one municipality does it mean that the citizens of Mostar will have to purchase new ID cards?

**A: Avis Benes:** As for your first question at this moment we would not like to comment on the remaining contents of yesterday's Assembly session. The adoption of the Statute of the Health Insurance Fund is the matter we thought we should be urgently reacting to. Of course, the item you mentioned is very important too but maybe we shall talk about it some other time. As for the restructuring of the City of Mostar I believe that you are all aware that this is a political issue and the process about which one cannot say anything with certainty at the moment except that the present status quo is unsustainable. As for the possible reflection of the political restructuring of the City of Mostar on the CIPS project this would mean that we would go into a domain of speculations which we shall refrain from.

**Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA/BBC):** I have a question for Mr. Solnes. Could you tell me what is the EUPM evaluation - whether an eventual attack on Iraq will reflect on BIH and is your mission carrying out some preparations in that context?

**A: Jon Oskar Solnes:** We have to talk about two different security situations. One has to do with SFOR, which is the overall security situation. The other one is law enforcement security situation, which is the EUPM. It is a good question because we have made assessments and we are looking into that matter. For the law enforcement

security situation we do not see a big challenge from the Iraqi situation. For the overall security situation that would maybe be more appropriate question for SFOR.

**Q: Ivan Bakovic (HTV Mostar):** I have a question and proposal. Question for Ms. Benes. At the roundtable held last week under the auspices of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung on reorganization of Mostar Fatima Leho stated that Mr. Bercot told her during one of their talks that Bosniaks will be outvoted if Mostar becomes one municipality. Is that correct? Could you confirm it? Is that the official stance of the OHR?

**A: Avis Benes:** I can be very clear in regards to your question. It is neither the official stance of the OHR, nor has Ambassador Bercot ever said that. I think I cannot be clearer.

**Q: Ivan Bakovic (HTV Mostar):** Could I present my proposal now? Taking into consideration that we have to pay parking ourselves as our media houses do not want to compensate could we ask you to meet us somewhere in the downtown?

**A: Avis Benes:** You encounter the same problem as the OHR employees. So my recommendation would be either to park somewhere else, or walk a bit.