

Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MA on HR's meeting with Foreign Minister of Serbia and Montenegro and Finance Minister of Serbia• MA on HR's visit to Posavina• DHR Bercot Warns Head of Mostar Municipality Old Town over Violation of HR Decision
OSCE	Richard Medic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OSCE RC Mostar welcomes new RCD
OSCE	Ambassador Thomas Young	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductory statement
SFOR	Maj. Fix	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement

Avis Benes - OHR:

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

I am very pleased that the new Director of OSCE RC Mostar Ambassador Thomas Young is here with us today. Richard will introduce him.

Richard Medic - OSCE

Thank you. From the side of OSCE - the new Director of our Regional Centre is here today. Ambassador Thomas Young started work in this post last week. Ambassador Young assumes this appointment after a 35-year tenure in the United Kingdom Diplomatic Service, during which he served in posts as diverse as Australia, Zambia, Turkey, Spain and Azerbaijan. Given his extensive experience in the promotion of human rights, civil society and good governance, the Ambassador is looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead. 'This country's past need not dominate its future', says Ambassador Young. He particularly welcomes the opportunity to work in close co-operation with the local citizens and authorities of this region since, as he says, 'citizens must be given more influence over the future of their country'.

Now I will pass the floor to Ambassador Young to say a few words.

Ambassador Thomas Young - OSCE

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

I am very pleased to be in Mostar to join the international effort for a better life for the citizens of this fine country. I am aware that some physical reconstruction has already been completed. But I recognise also that much needs to be done to restore harmony to the lives of the different communities in southern Bosnia and Herzegovina. In my work I shall therefore pay particular attention to the reform of education so that children and young people can grow up in an atmosphere of dialogue and trust between communities. These reforms should take place on a firm basis of respect for the rule of law and respect for human rights. New investment and jobs will only come if there is harmony and stability in society - otherwise investors will go elsewhere. I look forward to meeting and co-operating with you, the media representatives, as I commence my tasks during the coming period.

Thank you for your attention.

Avis Benes - OHR:

Thank you Ambassador Young and again on behalf of the OHR I wish you a welcome.

Before I proceed with the OHR statement for today let me shortly remind you of the two media advisories that you

all already received. The first one is about this morning's meeting of the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, with the Foreign Minister of Serbia and Montenegro as well as the Finance Minister of Serbia. The second one is the program of the High Representative's visit to Posavina. Copies are available here. Also I would like to kindly ask you to come on time.

On behalf of the OHR I have one point for you today regarding the letter that the Head of OHR South Ambassador Bercot addressed to Mr. Zijad Hadziomerovic, Mayor of Mostar municipality Old Town on violation of the High Representative's decision.

Deputy High Representative and Head of OHR South, Jean-Pierre Bercot on 17 February, that is two days ago, sent a letter to Mr. Zijad Hadziomerovic, Head of Municipality Mostar Old Town, expressing his astonishment over the fact that this municipality employs a person removed by the High Representative, namely Mr. Nedžad Behram. Mr. Behram was removed from his former position as a Head of Housing Department in Mostar Old Town in November 1999 due to deliberate obstruction of property law implementation and prevention of return of refugees and displaced persons. Unfortunately, it appears that Mr. Behram is still involved in some property issues, which has resulted in complaints sent to us from minority returnees to the municipality. Ambassador Bercot requested from Mr. Hadziomerovic to remove Mr. Behram from any further work on any issue relating to property or any matter affecting the rights of refugees and displaced persons. It is expected that this is to be done immediately.

That would be all on behalf of the OHR today.

As far as I was informed, SFOR does not have any specific statement for today. Now, we can proceed with your questions

Questions:

Q: Zvonimir Jukic (Onasa): Avis, I would like to repeat the question I had at the last press conference. I would like to know if the OHR checked whether this building is owned by the same person who is carrying out illegal construction works on the site of the former city pharmacy?

A: Avis Benes: This question can be responded to in the following manner. The name of the person who is renting this building to us is well known. Our contract is absolutely and completely clear and this building was constructed in a completely legal manner. As for some illegal construction works, you can address either City Commission for Illegal Construction or Municipal Prosecutors Office which should deal with cases of illegal construction.

Q: Fazlija Hebibovic (Nezavisne Novine): I have a question regarding yesterday's decision of the cantonal Government to appoint Alija Tipura and Mihajlo Butigan, current Minister and Deputy Minister of Finance, to the positions of Director and Deputy Director of Cantonal Agency for Privatisation. Let me remind you that Article 5 of the Law on executive positions foresees that elected officials, those holding positions in executive authority cannot hold positions of members of the Steering Boards, Advisers, Directors or Deputy Directors of Agency for Privatisation even a year after the end of tenure on such a position. Also let me remind you that before that Samir Sunagic, the current Minister of Economy and Entrepreneurship, was elected to the position of Deputy President of the Cantonal Chamber of Commerce. Also, let me remind you that these are two members of Party for BiH; the one who is constantly a member of the Government – Mr. Tipura. Your comment?

A: Avis Benes: If this question is addressed to the OHR then the reply will definitely be shorter than the answer. The reply is that as far as we are concerned this is a matter to be dealt with by the Election Commission.

Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA/BBC): I have two questions for the new Director of OSCE RC Mostar. What is your evaluation of the current situation in BiH and what in your opinion is the key problem in BiH?

A: Ambassador Young: I am aware that in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a lot to do to heal the rift between communities. In my statement I made it clear that I shall give a lot of importance to the question of the integration of education on the basis of respect of the rule of law and respect of human rights. I believe that the reform of education can take place so that the young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina can at least be educated together in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood. I am aware also that the economy of this country needs to be given a new life. And as I made clear investment follows stability and follows other qualities that I described.

There is a lot to do but I am confident that during my period here some real progress can be made on all these questions. Thank you.