

Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

Press Conference of the International Organizations seated in Mostar

18 December 2002

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HNC Health Insurance Fund• Trebinje explosion
OSCE	Richard Medic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OSCE attends Conference on Education Reform held in Mostar• OSCE hosts Seminars on Parliamentary Procedure• OSCE Condemns Destruction of Nativity Scene
UNHCR	Sanja Alikafic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trebinje explosion
SFOR	Maj. Fix	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement

Richard Medic - OSCE

Dobro jutro dame i gospodo and welcome to this week's presser. Today Avis won't be with us but OHR does have a couple of statements in writing. From the side of the OSCE we have three short points today.

As you all know, the 'International Conference on Education Reform in BiH' was held last weekend in Mostar. The conference, which gathered local and international education experts, was sponsored by the Independent Syndicate of Primary Education in BiH, Secondary Education Syndicate of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Norwegian Education Syndicate. OSCE was represented by Deputy Director of its Education Department Katherine Mahoney, who highlighted the vital importance of greater involvement by Teachers Unions in the process of education reform. She also encouraged participation of Union representatives in all working groups and suggested further ways teachers and union representatives could participate in the reform process. Teachers and their unions are key stakeholders in education reform in BiH. The successful conference in Mostar not only highlighted this fact, but also paved the way for greater teacher and union participation in reform efforts in the future.

Our second point for today.

OSCE this week hosted two training seminars on 'Parliamentary Procedure'. The seminars, held in Capljina and Stolac, were the first in what will be a series of similar training programs for municipal council and executive authority representatives. The seminar held in Stolac yesterday was attended by 13 Bosniak and Croat representatives who focused on how municipal authorities could improve their efficiency and effectiveness. In particular, participants discussed the importance of co-operation between legislative and executive authorities in making political decisions. OSCE commends the positive atmosphere and good will demonstrated by participants, who agreed that further improvement of the Municipal Council's work could only be achieved by co-operation, compromise and consensus on all sides.

And our final point for today.

OSCE joins the citizens of Mostar in condemning the appalling act of vandalism carried out Sunday night. Burning down the nativity scene on the Rondo is a disturbing attack on the principles of tolerance, mutual understanding and respect associated with the period between Bajram and Christmas. At the same time, OSCE applauds both the swift action taken by police investigating this crime, and the public condemnation expressed by local authorities across the city.

That is all from OSCE. I'll pass the floor to OHR.

OHR South

The first point refers to the HNC Health Insurance Fund. Last week, the Principal Deputy High Representative,

Ambassador Donald Hays, delivered the competent Herzegovina-Neretva Canton officials and institutions the Plan for the creation of a functional Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Health Insurance Fund. As the existing parallel structures in this field present a clear breach of the FBiH Law on Health Insurance and the Rule of Law and due to the fact that the competent Cantonal authorities have failed to reach a mutual agreement on the issue themselves, the OHR has produced this Plan which contains unambiguous legal and economic arguments in support of the creation of a functional Cantonal Fund. The establishment of such a Fund is an unequivocal legal requirement placed upon the concerned cantonal authorities. The Plan is presented in the form of 9 specific tasks, such as appointment of the 9th member of the Fund's Management Board, moving of the Fund's staff into joint premises, adoption of the Fund's Statute and the Book of Rules on Internal Organisation, making of a financial audit of the existing Bosniak and Croat funds, granting immediate access to health facilities without discriminatory restrictions to all those insured by the Fund. There is a time-frame foreseen for fulfillment of each of these tasks. After the implementation of the proposed reforms and a year's successful operation of the Fund, the HNC Health Insurance Fund Management Board is to consider the process of merger between the Herzegovina-Neretva-Canton and West Herzegovina Canton Health Insurance Funds. The competent HNC authorities are urged to adopt the proposed measures without further delays and to immediately start implementing the Plan in its entirety.

Secondly, the OHR commends the local police in Trebinje for condemning the explosion in Trebinje and for asking for those with to come forward, and we hope to see them bring the perpetrators to justice as soon as possible. But ultimately, the IC holds the political leaders of the RS responsible for preventing this sort of intimidation against returnees. Going through the motions of condemning these incidents is not enough. In any other European country, politicians would have visited the sites of such incidents to reassure the returnees, and pledged the necessary police resources to protect returnees and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.

Richard Medic - OSCE

Thank you. Now we can pass the floor to UNHCR.

Sanja Alikafic - UNHCR

Good morning on behalf of UNHCR. UNHCR SO SBIH strongly condemns all the recent incidents in particular return related one in the area of Trebinje, where an explosive device was set on the minority house in Rasovac settlement. Fortunately, there were no injuries as the house was not inhabited, but was heavily damaged. We urge local authorities to condemn the incident and undertake all the necessary measures to protect returnee property and prevent a repetition of the incidents.

Richard Medic - OSCE

Thank you. SFOR has no statement for today but is obviously ready to answer your questions. Are there any questions? No questions? Going once? Going twice?

Then I'd like to wish for those celebrating a merry Christmas and happy New Year, and see you next year.