

## **Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar**

	<b>Spokesperson</b>	<b>Topic</b>
OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Announcement of the HR's Visit to Herzegovina on 27/09/02</li><li>• Correction of Dnevni List report on Mostar Jewish Community's statement on the land for the Jewish Synagogue in Mostar</li></ul>
OSCE	Philipp Henning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• OSCE Mission Deputy Head's departure</li><li>• OSCE Head of Mission Visits Counting Centre</li><li>• Stolac Public Tribune on Education</li><li>• Konjic Public Tribune on Youth</li></ul>
UNHCR	Sanja Alikalic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Condemnation of Kljuc mosque incident</li></ul>
SFOR	Maj. De Lambert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No statement</li></ul>

### **Avis Benes - OHR**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to today's press conference of International Organisations seated in Mostar. Today, on behalf of the OHR I have two very brief points for you.

The first one refers to the visit the High Representative for BiH will pay to Herzegovina the coming Friday, September 27. You will, of course, either today or tomorrow, be sent the complete schedule of the visit, but I will now just give you the highlights of the visit for your information.

The High Representative arrives to Mostar in the morning where he will visit the Cernica Court building and will meet the Presidents of Mostar Municipal Courts I and II, as well as the Presidents of the Cantonal Court and the Mostar Central Zone Court. After that, there will be a brief media opportunity – according to the current schedule, the door-stepper takes place between 10:40 – 10:50 hours. It means the statement will be a brief one and there will be an opportunity for a couple of your questions. What follows is the High Representative's live radio interview / call-in at the Croat Radio Herzeg-Bosnia. The next media opportunity takes place in Stolac and is scheduled for 13:45 and 14:15 hours – the High Representative will visit "Agroplod" company in Stolac. The company produces medical herbs and organic food. No special statement is foreseen for this visit but a photo/camera opportunity.

In the afternoon, the High Representatives is heading to Trebinje where, from 15:45 –16:15 hours, he will visit Popovo Polje agricultural project. This is a significant reconciliation project in the frame of which the people from Trebinje and Ravno agree upon the Popovo Polje irrigation system. The project is considered to be quite a successful one. He will also be hosted by Radio Trebinje and, following that, at 17:00 hours, the High Representative will hold a Town Hall which is open to all the citizens. Media are, naturally, also invited to attend with a note that journalists will not have an opportunity to pose questions. Basically, it is conceived as a "vox populi" kind of event, i.e. the citizens will have an opportunity to directly ask questions. The High Representative is today in Bosanski Brod and Prijedor – a Town Hall will also be organised in Prijedor.

My other brief point is basically a correction of. In a last week's edition of Dnevni list, there is a claim, in the interview with Mrs. Erna Danon-Cipra, the President of the Jewish Community of Mostar, that the OHR did not give its consent that the Jewish Community of Mostar be allocated the land for the construction of the Jewish synagogue free of charge. There is also a figure of some 12 thousand KM for the land rent mentioned which may be misleading in the sense that one could get the impression that it is the OHR that requests the amount, which is absolutely incorrect. According to the High Representative's Decision on the Allocation of Socially-Owned Land, there is a legal requirement for the beneficiary to pay a certain amount of rent for the land for which a waiver has

been issued to the municipality. So in principle – an amount for the rent is to be paid. But as for the amount itself, the OHR has absolutely nothing to do with it. It is upon the municipality and the beneficiary to agree upon the amount. Naturally, the rent can be minimal. So, this part of the procedure has got nothing to do with the OHR whatsoever. This is all on behalf of the OHR for the time being. Now I give the floor to Mr. Henning of the OSCE.

### **Philipp Henning - OSCE**

Good morning, everybody. Yesterday evening, the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, gave a farewell to his long-deputy, Ambassador Dieter Woltmann. He thanked Woltmann for his outstanding performance as the Deputy Head of the Mission and wished him all the best for the future. Ambassador Beecroft emphasised Woltmann's invaluable contribution to Human Rights, Rule of Law and elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He understands and loves the country and would take with him our admiration, said Beecroft.

In his response Woltmann assessed the current situation in BiH saying that, even though a lot remains to be done, one should not forget how the situation was a few years ago. Using the metaphor about the glass being half full or half empty he said: "The glass was indeed almost empty, now it is half full."

Ambassador Woltmann leaves his position after three years. From 1 October on he will be stationed in Kabul, Afghanistan. His job there will be to help restructure the Afghan ForeignService.

Now, on to some Media Advisories. The first of all is the one referring to an event which is going to take place tomorrow in Sarajevo but which might also be of some interest for Mostar media. The head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, will visit the Sarajevo Counting Centre for the upcoming elections, tomorrow, Thursday, 26 September 2002. He will observe the preparations for the ballot counting in the October 5 elections, meet with the staff and tour the facilities. Media are cordially invited to join Ambassador Beecroft at the Joint Institutions building, Marijin Dvor, at 10:30 tomorrow.

On another note, the OSCE is continuing its series of public tribunes. There will be a public tribune on education tonight in Stolac. Representatives of several parties will discuss their views and their plans for education reform with citizens of the region. The tribune will be held in Stolac restaurant "Villa Ragusa" at 19:00 hours.

Another tribune is going to take place in Konjic tomorrow. It is about youth issues. Political parties' representatives will present their views and plans for giving the youth of this country a better chance for their future. And they will exchange their opinions with those of the citizens. The event is going to take place at Drvena sala of the National University at 18:00 o'clock tomorrow.

That is all from my side, thanks for your attention.

### **Sanja Alikalfic - UNHCR**

Good morning to all on behalf of the UNHCR. The UNHCR would like to take this opportunity to condemn once again all the acts of violence aimed at returnees, in particular with reference to the last incident in Kljuc/Gacko where the recently reconstructed mosque was damaged. Terrorist acts of this kind did not succeed in the past and will not succeed in the future to negatively affect the freedom to a safe return nor will it reverse the encouraging trend of returns to and from the eastern Herzegovina.

In addition, although it is to be noted with satisfaction that, at least all the relevant institutions have condemned the incident, the UNHCR expects the local police to do its utmost to find the perpetrators. Thank you.

### **Avis Benes - OHR**

Let me just remind that, when it comes to the Kljuc incident, you will have already noted that the PIC SB Ambassadors reacted to it on September 20 and have also categorically condemned the incident in Kljuc. You also know that last Monday, the SDHR, Ambassador Gerhard Enver Schrömbgens, who is in charge of the returns and reconstruction issue, also visited the incident site. Apart from the condemnation, he also reiterated that this incident is an act of desperation by those who want to take BiH back to the past. Yet, this is not going to happen.

As for SFOR and Major De Lambert, he has no particular statement for you today but is, of course, open to your questions.

## Questions and Answers:

**Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88):** Avis, is the OHR in touch with the representative and officials of the HNC Government or, perhaps, with the representatives of the Trade Union of Education Workers from, let me put it conditionally, Bosniak-majority parts of this Canton? It is 25 September today already and the classes have not started yet. The talks between the Cantonal Government and the Trade Union representatives are due today at 12:00 o'clock but, according to the information that I have, the Unions will stick to their position, i.e. their strike will continue.

**A: Avis Benes:** The OHR very closely follows the situation which we find to be utterly serious. But, the OHR's view is that it is primarily the Government that is to find a solution for a way out of the crisis. This is, of course, to be done in talks with all the relevant factors, including the Trade Unions, the Federation etc.

**Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA):** My question goes to the OSCE. Mr. Henning, terrorist-like incidents are becoming more and more frequent as we approach the elections BiH. The mosque in Gacko has been demolished, which is also a terrorist act; the Chief of the local police of BiH Serbs in Sarajevo has been murdered. We do know the OSCE does not organise this year's elections, but could you tell us whether you assess there is a threat that the elections be jeopardised by such incidents?

**A: Philipp Henning:** I do not think those deplorable acts will in any way affect the conduct of the elections. The preparations for the elections are going smoothly and everything is on tracks so there is no chance for anyone who would like to do some kind of obstruction to this process to succeed in that.

**A: Avis Benes:** Any further questions? No? Thank you for your attention, see you next week.