

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

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Spokesperson</b>	<b>Topic</b>
OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High Representative to visit Mostar/Foca</li><li>• Unification of C7 and C8 Health Insurance Funds</li></ul>
UNMIBH	Kirsten Haupt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Farewell</li></ul>
SFOR	Lt. Col. Rambaud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Humanitarian aid</li><li>• Update on caches</li></ul>

### **Avis Benes - OHR**

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will visit Mostar and Foca/Srbinje on Thursday this week. This will be the third visit to Mostar over the last month. In Mostar he will join Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and other dignitaries at a ceremony to recognise the beginning of work on rebuilding of the arch of the Old Bridge. The special press statement is not planned but there will be a photo opportunity at:09.50 hrs at the Old Bridge..

In Foca/Srbinje, the High Representative will take part in a Town Hall meeting similar to one held in Siroki Brijeg, starting at 17.30 hrs. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to call our office.

Second item refers to the question of unification of the Ministry of Health, i.e. Health Insurance Funds in this Canton.

On Monday, June 24, during his visit to Mostar and participation at the Business Forum, the Principal Deputy High Representative Ambassador Donald Hayes met with Canton 7 Health Minister, Zeljko Ragus and Deputy Minister, Halil Tule. The meeting was organized to discuss again the implementation of the FBiH Law on Health Insurance in Canton 7.

During the meeting, Principal Deputy High Representative Mr. Hayes stressed the fact that Canton 7 is the last Canton in the Federation which does not have a unified and functional health insurance fund (HIF) which should be the case in accordance with the above FBiH law, which was adopted back in 1997. The progress has been lacking due to numerous reasons, but primarily because the representatives of the Croat side insists that Canton 7 HIF should be merged with Canton 8 HIF since there are no hospital capacities in the latter Canton and the inhabitants of that Canton have for a long time been investing in Mostar health facilities. Although, the economic and other benefits of this merger are clear to all or should be clear to all, the Bosniaks' representatives justify their reluctance to merge the funds by fact that Canton 7 HIF is not yet fully established and can therefore not be merged with another HIF. Moreover, the representatives of Bosniaks fear becoming a minority in the Canton 7 and Canton 8 merged HIF.

Having realized that the two parties are not moving any closer towards the reconciliation of their positions, and this process has taken a long period of time which you are all witnesses of, the Principal Deputy High Representative concluded that OHR will draft a proposal of concrete actions and timelines to be taken by all responsible parties in Canton 7 with the objective of establishing a functional HIF in that Canton and creating the necessary precondition for its merger with Canton 8 HIF. The OHR is of the opinion that it is completely irresponsible from the C7 representatives to have been stalling this problem for such a long period of time thus preventing people from using health services in the whole Canton. Namely, health insurance funds' beneficiaries of, so to say, one side were not in a position to get medical treatment on the other side except if they paid full price. This situation is even more strange since allegedly some progress was made by opening unified account for the whole Canton. Finally, the International Community should stress once again that it is not here to do the job of those who were elected to do so, even though it is unfortunately happening sometimes to the relief of politicians who collect salaries for the lack of work. The citizens should be informed about the incompetence of their representatives and this example of the failure to merge health insurance funds is a classical example of denying the rights of citizens, that they have in accordance with the law, to the account of political games and irresponsible behaviour.

That is all on behalf of the OHR.

No special statement from the UN today except for the fact that this is the last press conference that Kirsten is going to attend in her capacity as the UN Regional Office Spokesperson.

#### **Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH**

It is correct. This is the last time for me to join you for the press conference. As of next week, I will be working in Sarajevo replacing Stefo, who you all know, who is leaving the Mission. It has been only a short time, six months, but I have really enjoyed it, I have enjoyed the work and the city of Mostar. In terms of work, I have been in the time when we have seen quite few very positive changes when I think about the Ministry of Interior. You all remember in the winter, in December, we have seen the move of the MoI all together back to the Stone Building and unification of all offices in that building. We have seen the establishment of the One City-One Police here in Mostar, which has been a very successful project, increasing the effectiveness of the police here in Mostar. And we have seen also in this time establishment of the position of the Police Commissioner in Canton 7. That was a very important step in the de-politicisation of the police, as it is now very experienced police officer who is making or made decisions regarding operational issues of the police. In the very near future we will see the outcome of the System Analysis for Canton 7 that will lead hopefully to accreditation of the police force in Canton 7 as a democratic police force. I am quite confident that this process will continue in the positive way as I have seen it here in the last six months.

I want to thank you for having come to these press conferences, for your interesting questions. I do not know whether there will be a successor to my post here but you can feel free to contact me in Sarajevo and I will do my best to get you the information that you require.

I want to wish you all the best and thank you.

#### **Avis Benes:**

Maybe we will be seeing you as the special envoy from Sarajevo.

#### **Lt. Col. Rambaud - MND SE**

I have no specific statement today. I would like to mention only two points.

The first one is that you have a media advisory down there which regards humanitarian aid that we will deliver on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June.

The second point is that I would like to assure you that SFOR is doing its best to follow on and check on a daily basis to check and visit all the places where ammunition and weapons could have been hidden in Mostar region.

#### **Avis Benes:**

Before we proceed with your questions, if there are any, let me just say that we from the OHR do not have the statement on the health insurance in writing available now. However, it will be prepared afterwards and send to you by fax, e-mail, in the way which is the most effective one.

#### **Questions:**

**Q: Faruk Kajtaz (Youth Radio X):** Is OHR going to take an arbitrary decision regarding the health insurance funds merger as there are some things that are pointing into that direction? Secondly, separate financing of the high education institutions *[the rest of the question was not understandable]*

**A: Avis Benes:** Regarding the unification of the health insurance funds, there is portion of the Federation Law that stipulates that issue exactly. What the OHR will do is the following – we will prepare a proposal of concrete actions and timelines and adherence to them from both sides will be expected. That is the formulation that we can use for the time being.

As for the education and dualism in the cantonal budget on education, it is one of the problems. The OHR's position is known. The OHR supports unified budget, including the portion that refers to the education. One to

some extent positive issue in the process of passing a new budget is the fact that this process has become more transparent, i.e. that we have reached some sort of a public discussion on specific items of the budget, which has not been the case so far. Many people, organizations and parties got involved in the entire process of adoption of the budget with their proposals, objections, etc and it is necessary that they influence the way in which the solution will be taken thorough their political representatives. Primarily through the representatives in the Cantonal Assembly who are the ones to adopt or reject that very budget.

**Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA/BBC):** I have a question for Mr. Rambaud. A month ago, SFOR informed that there were 4,000 more mortar shells in Mostar. In the meantime we did not receive any information as to was anything discovered, was any kind of progress made, are there any traces?

**A: Lt. Col. Rambaud:** Thank you for your question. It is true since one month ago we have not found these 4000 mortar shells that are supposed to be hidden in Mostar. But it does not mean that we have not searched them. For the moment what I can say is that on a daily basis we receive phone calls and information. We receive many, many phones calls with indications where some weapons and ammunition could have been hidden. More than 15 places have been checked for the moment but we have still more than 10 to visit again. For the moment the results are only weapons, some ammunition boxes but not big quantities, only if I can say for personal use in brackets. We include these results in our Harvest campaign. We did not elaborate and communicate on these results. Be convinced that we are continuing our mission and we are trying to succeed in days, weeks and months to come.

**Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88):** I would like to refer again to the health insurance issue. I would like to know if there is any time-frame....could you tell us when will the Deputy High Representative come up with the proposal that will be forwarded to the Cantonal Assembly representatives?

**A: Avis Benes:** At this very moment I do not have exact date. However, I know the timeframe within which it will be passed. I think that with certain confidence we can say that it could happen within the following two weeks. However, do not consider this as the definite date.