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BiH State-related Issues

BiH Presidency members meet with UNICEF delegation

The BiH Presidency members Jozo Krizanovic and Beriz Belkic met on Monday with an UNICEF delegation, headed by the agency’s special envoy for the Balkans Steven Allen, to discuss the position and the rights of the children in BiH, as well as the preparations for the a special UN session dedicated to the children. The UNICEF delegation presented to the Presidency members agreed goals from the Plan of Action for Children in BiH for the period 2001-2010.

BiH Foreign Ministry welcomes successful organization of the Kosovo elections

Oslobodjenje reports that the BiH Foreign Ministry welcomed a successful organization and holding of the parliamentary elections in Kosovo. The Ministry assessed the elections as a crucial step in the development of the democracy in Kosovo and the entire region.

Hadziahmetovic says conditions for the donor's conference to be fulfilled in two-three months

Commenting on the stoppage of the donor's conference for BiH all until BiH state and entity officials fulfill 18 conditions set by the European Union, BiH Foreign Trade and Economic Relations Minister Azra Hadziahmetovic told Oslobodjenje that a part of these conditions was about a set of economic laws, which were in the final parliamentary procedure, and which should be adopted in a month. Concerning some other conditions related to the progress in economic reforms, Hadziahmetovic said that a majority of them was the responsibility of the entities, particularly those related to the acceleration of the privatization process. She added that these conditions might be fulfilled in two months.

Tokic initiates formation of a single BiH intelligence service

At a press conference held in Sarajevo on Monday, BiH House of Peoples Speaker Sejfudin Tokic said that the existence of the three intelligence services represented another BiH nonsense. According to Oslobodjenje, Tokic will therefore launch consultations with the BiH Presidency on the formation of a single BiH intelligence service and the abolishment of the current services.

The Alliance for Change announces replacement of ministers at all levels

The Alliance for Change representatives concluded at their regular meeting in Sarajevo late on Monday to initiate removal of certain ministers at all levels due to poor results achieved so far. According to Oslobodjenje source, this was rather general political conclusion and it was therefore still premature to speak about concrete names.

The Alliance for Change dissatisfied with a fact Petritsch appointed BiH Election Commission members

According to Oslobodjenje, the Alliance for Change expressed its dissatisfaction with a fact the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, had decided to appoint four national members of the BiH Election Commission although this was an obligation of the BiH state bodies. "We should not adopt the Election Law at all, if the High Representative appoints the members of the election commission," an Oslobodjenje source close to the Alliance said. At a press conference in Sarajevo on Monday, BiH Liberal-Democratic Party (LDS) leader Rasim Kadic also expressed his disappointment because Petritsch had appointed BiH Election Commission members in place of the BiH House of Representatives.

A BiH passport found in an abandoned house in Kabul

Dnevni Avaz [reports](#) that, according to the New York Times, a BiH passport has been found recently in an abandoned house in the Afghanistan capital of Kabul together with a notebook written in Bosnian (Serb-Croatian) language and some other papers.

BiH House of Representatives to discuss requirements related to the country's admission into the Council of Europe

The House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly will today decide on the requirements, which BiH has to meet upon its admission to the Council of Europe. The BiH Presidency and the Council of Ministers have adopted a letter and a statement, according to which BiH will take all responsibilities in order to become a member of this European institution. The BiH Presidency took the responsibility and obligation that one year after the admission of BiH to the Council of Europe, amendments to the constitutional laws in line with the decision by the BiH Constitutional Court are to be adopted. In the same period BiH should continue the signing and ratification of European conventions on the fight against terrorism and the transfer of processes related to crime activities. The cooperation between the armies in BiH is to become better on the basis of the defense policy and armed forces in BiH are to be re-organized.

Vjesnik: Interview with Kresimir Zubak, the BiH Minister for Human Rights and Refugees

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

How many people left Bosnia during the war?

Around 2,2 million people. Out of that number 1,1 million went abroad. So far we have managed to return 790.000 persons to the country. There are around 590.000 internally displaced persons in BiH and some 650.000 BiH citizens in Croatia and Serbia.

Do you have any data how many of them want to return?

According to our data there are around 450.000 of them, and we want to provide them with fundamental rights and possibilities for the return.

How much did Croatia allocate for the return of Bosnian Croats from Croatia to their homes in BiH this year?

This year it was 5 million DEM, as for the next year we got promises that we would receive double that sum and we hope that we'll be able to solve most of the problems that are related to the return of the Croats. A big number of Bosniaks are also displaced. It is also interesting that the Serbs, which was not a case before, want to return to the Federation of BiH. We've had 34.000 Serb returnees in the first eight months of this year which is the highest rate ever.

How willing are the Bosniaks to return?

When it comes to return, it was never an issue with the Bosniaks regardless of the area. The interest is big. The policy was standardized everywhere, the return was encouraged, which was not the case with the Croat policy. On the contrary, the people were discouraged.

When Croats in BiH say that they are deprived of their rights how do you react to those assessments?

Everyone in BiH feels like that because such is the overall climate. People do not have fundamental rights to have a normal life. In theory they do, but in practice it is different. There are attempts to outvote us, that's true. It must be reiterated that the policy so far was wrong, and that some prelates had run it to. The situation now is different.

In the last weeks one could hear and read about some sort of the "Bosnian" nation? Your thoughts on that?

That nonsense was last mentioned by Alija Izetbegovic. Bosnian nation! There was one attempt and it failed.

Vecernji List: Mihalj says that out of present 432 border crossings only one-fifth of them will be

legal

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

'At the moment we are controlling from 72 to 75% of the BiH state border, and 476 kilometers of the border have not been covered yet. We have 1349 of employees and it is about 50% of the planned number. (...) We cooperate with the UN and SFOR and we know the places, where you can enter the country. There are 432 of such places and when we compare this number with the situation that, after the defining of border relations with neighboring countries, 98 border crossings should be determined, only one-fifth of the possible border crossings would be legal. (...) By December 18, we shall completely take over control over the airports in Mostar and Banja Luka.' (...)

Brcko District

Nezavisne Novine: 15 parties run for three vacated seats in the Brcko Assembly

The international Supervisor of Brcko Henry Clarke yesterday closed the competition for three vacant seats in the Interim Assembly of Brcko District, vacated after withdrew of the SDS councilors, on 3 October this year. Fifteen political parties from the District submitted the applications to the competition for vacated seats. "Since the representatives of the SDS did not changed their decision until today at 10:00, new members of the parliament will be selected out of these political parties and several independent candidates, who submitted the applications to the competition", stated Suzana Pejicic, the spokesperson of OHR. She did not wanted to confirm directly whether those candidates will be of Serb nationality, although it is almost certain. But it is not known from which political party those representatives will be. "This entire process was initiated for the reason that the Supervisor and the remaining Serb councilors concluded that the Serb people

is not adequately represented at the Interim Assembly of Brcko District", said Pejdic, and pointed out that "the aim of Supervisor is to see all three nationalities in Brcko being adequately represented at that institution." She could not state when the names of the new councilors are going to be known, also adding that the applications are at the moment in process of translation, after which the interviews with narrowed circle of the applicants should take place. The Interim Assembly of the District was appointed in March 2000, by former Supervisor for this town Robert Farrand, and since then several reconstruction of the Assembly took place exclusively on the basis of a competition for which the interested political parties and the independent candidates submitted their applications. It is to be assumed that Supervisor Clarke will appoint three new candidates before the next session of the Interim Assembly that is scheduled for 27th November this year. The President of Brcko's SDS Milan Puric stated that his party remains with its earlier opinion, that is, they do not want to participate in the work of the Assembly until new elections are scheduled for the District. "Despite to that, we will continue our cooperation with OHR and work on the overcoming of current situation in the District", stated Puric. "It is final time for scheduling of the elections in Brcko, because this is the only place in a democratic world where the representatives were not chosen by the will of the voters but they were selected by OHR through certain competition", stressed Puric.

Nezavisne Novine: Nothing against the harmonization of tax rates

Head of the Revenue Agency in Brcko District of BiH, Osman Osmanovic, supported yesterday the request of the RS Ministry of trade and tourism for harmonization of the tax rates in both of the entities and Brcko District, but he stressed that Brcko is not an obstacle for such an agreement. He made a comment on the statement of this Ministry. As it was stated,

there is a great issue of unjust transfer of all kinds of the tax incomes to the budget of the District on the damage of the entities. It was explained with the fact that the companies dealing with the import and trade of oil and oil derivatives pay the taxes in the District, and later the same goods end up at the entities' markets. Osmanovic stated that "it is true that all sorts of things are happening in this country, but the question is where the transfers are actually happening and of what kind." "The District has already prepared the proposal of the Law on Sales Tax and Excise Tax, that was harmonized with the entities and we can hardly wait for that law to enter the Assembly procedure and to be implemented. However, it can not be done simply for the reason that the entities are those that are not able to reach an agreement related to the package of the harmonized laws on taxes. We can not be responsible just because they are not able to make reconciliation", stressed Osmanovic.

Federation

War-disabled persons request removal of Federation Minister Suada Hadzovic

At a special session held in Sarajevo on Monday, the Assembly of the BiH Association of War-disabled Persons (RVIBiH) rejected an initial version of the BiH Federation draft law on the rights of veterans, war-disabled persons and families of killed soldiers. The members of the Assembly also requested the removal of the current BiH Federation Minister for Veterans' Issues, Suada Hadzovic. According to Oslobodjenje, the Assembly will send its amendments to the draft law to the authorized Federation Ministry with a request that they are incorporated in the text of the law, otherwise the Association will take more radical steps including street protests and blockages of the main roads.

Grabovac sets ultimatum to tax debtors

At a meeting attended by the representatives of the local authorities, leading BiH companies and the international community held in the BiH Federation Chamber of Commerce building on Monday, BiH Federation Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Nikola Grabovac said that hundreds of companies particularly those importing oil, coffee, cigarettes and alcohol were owing to the state more than 420 million marks in unpaid taxes. "Everywhere in the world this is treated as robbery and we will act in this way and persecute the robbers. Without paid taxes, we will not allow the import of oil and other goods. It is the high time to impose order in this sector," Dnevni Avaz quoted Grabovac as saying.

BiH Federation Urban Planning Ministry and OHR fail to agree on amendments to the property laws

According to Dnevni Avaz, the representatives of the BiH Federation Urban Planning Ministry and OHR on Monday failed to agree on the amendments to the property laws. A number of provisions proposed by OHR have been agreed in the past months, but Minister Ramiz Mehmedagic still refuses on behalf of the BiH Federation to accept the legalization of the contracts on the exchange of apartments signed from April 1, 1992 to February 7, 1998. Avaz learned from OHR that the talks would be continued, and that there was a possibility for the High Representative to impose the amendments if the agreement on the issue is not reached.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Shareholders of Hercegovacka Bank to request compensation for their damage

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The Assembly of the Hercegovacka Bank shareholders issued a press release in which they expressed their stands from an

emergency session, which was held in Mostar on November 14.

The shareholders and their lawyers have decided to continue with the proceedings and they will hand over material on the damage caused in this bank to foreign law firms, which are interested in this case. They have also decided to institute legal proceedings before domestic Courts in order to compensate for the damage caused by the introduction of the Provisional Administration in this bank.

They will send a request to all media outlets in BiH Federation to enable that the truth about the bank, its shareholders and depositors is published.

The shareholders will also organize an international press conference in Mostar during which they and their lawyers will express their stands with regard to the Hercegovacka Bank case.

They have called on all those, who contributed to the raid into the bank and its destruction, to publicly state the results of the investigation related to suspicious activities because of which they raided the bank. These activities are alleged suspicious financial transactions, non-transparent HVO sub-accounts and suspicious activities of Croherc and Primus.

They have decided to send letters again to Alija Behmen, the Federation Prime Minister, Nikola Grabovac, the Federation Minister of Finances, Jozo Krizanovic, the Chairman of the BiH Presidency, Karlo Filipovic, the President of the Federation and other official representatives of the Croat people in the Federation, asking them to express their stands and use all their powers in order to enable that the bank starts functioning again.

They estimate that since the money, which was paid back for the granted loans is not returned to the circulation, the solvency of the territory, where the bank used to function, will be damaged for a hundred million Marks by the end of this

year.

The shareholders will demand from the 'Deloitte and Touch' a report on the bank's operations during 2000 in order to present the findings of the firm that is authorized for this kind of job.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Interview with Zeljko Obradovic, the Stolac Mayor

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

'We have been talking every day with the employees of the Municipality, who are in charge of the Education issues and who are working with the Heads of the schools, and I believe that the situation is rather normal. I also hope that the Police and judicial bodies will do their part of job and that the dynamics and results of the investigation will contribute to the further stabilization of the situation in Stolac. (...) I would put the issue of the Careva Mosque in the context of overall events in Stolac, and it is evading of institutions, first of all the Municipal ones, and this immediately creates a space for the lack of understanding and incidents. I was surprised by the attitude of the Board for the Reconstruction of the Mosque, because I had the impression that it was their wish that they do not get a construction permit and that they do not communicate with the Municipal bodies, but they used a certain hierarchy, first of all the Bosniak representatives in the Federation bodies. For this reason certain solutions came from the Federation level, and it is clear that that Federation Minister for Physical Planning does not have a certain legal framework or ground for issuing of construction permits of any kind and that it is an obligation of the Municipal and Cantonal Authority bodies. There is no any obstacle to prevent the solving of the Careva Mosque issue, through the talks with the Municipality and respecting legal frameworks. The Stolac Municipality, Municipal Authorities and

I, as a Mayor, are not against the reconstruction of religious facilities and we do not want to be brought in the same position, as it was the case of Trebinje and Banja Luka. Stolac has a specific position and I do not want that certain Bosniak politicians bring Stolac in this context of the events. (...) Probably the atmosphere and conditions in Stolac have made possible that 4000 Bosniaks have returned to Stolac. I am wondering why some Bosniaks and some Bosniak politicians do not mention this fact since, obviously, the conditions for the return are normal. (...) Due to different interests, primarily the political one, Stolac was not receiving financial investments from the International Community, but also from domestic investors and budget levels. (...) During my talks with the IC representatives, I informed them about these problems but I also stated them in a summary of all events in Stolac and, first of all, an attitude towards Stolac. I can say that I was pleasantly surprised because they supported our stand that more money should be invested in Stolac, especially by the IC and World Bank, and that better relations and contacts should be developed with the Cantonal Authority bodies and in this way, help Stolac to resolve current issues and problems. It will certainly contribute to the creation of a better and more positive atmosphere in Stolac.

Republika Srpska

RS Minister of Urban Planning Nedjo Djuric says RS accepts the OHR proposal on exchange of tenancy rights

Tuesday's edition of Glas Srpski quotes Republika Srpska Minister of Urban Planning, Housing Issues, Utilities and Ecology Nedjo Djuric, as saying that the RS will accept the OHR proposal on exchange of tenancy rights without requesting consent from the owner of the flat in both entities. "The OHR

proposal is acceptable for the RS since it complies with Annex 7 of the DPA,” said Djuric. Unlike Minister Djuric, his counterpart from the Federation, Ramiz Mehmedagic does not agree with the OHR proposal. The paper also quotes OHR Spokeswoman, Alexandra Stiglmayer, as saying that there have been many problems in regard to the exchange of flats and that is why it has been proposed that all such contracts should be legalized if authorities from both Entities agree on it.

RS High Prosecutorial Council decides there are no grounds for dismissal of RS Public Prosecutor Vojin Dimitrijevic

Both Banja Luka dailies, Nezavisne Novine and Glas Srpski, carry a press release issued by the Republika Srpska High Prosecutorial Council, which states that RS High Prosecutorial Council decided, at its Monday session, there were no grounds for dismissal of RS Public Prosecutor Vojislav Dimitrijevic in terms of the Law on the RS Public Prosecutor’s Office, paragraph 1, article 39 with regard to article 37. Furthermore, the press release states that Vojin Dimitrijevic did not abuse his authority foreseen by the article 3, paragraph 1 of the Law on RS Public Prosecutor’s Office, therefore there are no grounds for his dismissal. The RS High Prosecutorial Council will forward this opinion to the RS National Assembly.

Pale and Srpsko Sarajevo authorities condemned murder of a Bosniak returnee

Tuesday’s edition of Glas Spski carries press releases, issued and signed by Mayor of Srpsko Sarajevo Predrag Lasic and President of the Pale Municipal Assembly Milovan Bjelica, which states that the Srpsko Sarajevo and Pale authorities condemned the murder of a Bosniak returnee to Pale, Seid Mutapcic, and expressed their deepest regret because of this tragic event. “We are convinced that the Police in Srpsko Sarajevo will be fast and efficient in shedding light on this

crime and identify the perpetrators", states the press release. Municipal authorities from Pale called on all returnees to come to the Public Security Center and take over their documents, which would help the Police to have a full evidence on the process of return and make returnees safer.

RS leadership in an unofficial visit to Moscow

During the meeting with the Russian Parliament Speaker, Genadiy Seleznyov, the Republika Srpska leadership requested Russia to become more actively engaged in the future implementation of the Dayton Agreement. The RS President, Mirko Sarovic, who is leading the RS delegation, told the RS Radio that the meeting had assessed that the Dayton Agreement, signed 6 years before, had no alternative and had to be implemented without the imposition of new solutions and revisions. The RS Parliament Speaker, Dragan Kalinic, assessed the meetings with representatives of the Russian Parliament as successful. He pointed out that a good parliamentary cooperation could contribute to a more successful cooperation between Russia and the RS/BiH. The RS delegation, including Vice President Dragan Cavic and Premier Mladen Ivanic, will also be received by the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov and the Patriarch of Moscow and the whole of Russia, Alexei II. The delegation is scheduled to meet with Russian businessmen. Tuesday's edition of Nezavisne Novine reports that the RS leadership, headed by RS President Mirko Sarovic, is in an unofficial visit to Moscow. The paper quotes an anonymous source from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as saying that the RS delegation has not been officially scheduled to meet with the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, and that the Ministry does not have the information that the RS delegation has arrived to Moscow. According to the paper, the RS delegation did not inform the BiH Foreign Ministry about their trip to Russia.

SNS says “backstage maneuvering” over The Hague’s extradition continues

The member of the main committee of the Serb National Alliance (SNS), Jezdimir Spasojevic, said a “backstage maneuvering over extradition of war crime suspects to The Hague is continuing” in the Republika Srpska, SRNA reported on Monday. Spasojevic said that RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic’s statement confirming that an order had been issued for the arrest of war crime suspects, had failed to provide answers to many important questions. “They intended to blur the truth and pass the responsibility onto somebody else, and most probably onto the justice authorities and the RS Ministry of Interior,” Spasojevic said. He added that the SNS was calling on the RS officials to be more specific when making such statements in the future in order to clarify individual responsibility when implementing The Hague decisions.

International Community

The New York Times: Islam Is Part of the West, Too

By Wolfgang Petritsch

“The Sept. 11 attack on America has sparked a debate about Islam that has, unfortunately, been framed in terms of us (the civilized, Western world) and them (the dangerous, suspect Muslims). Even well-intentioned statements dismissing the rhetoric of crusades have not softened an implicit skepticism among many people toward Islam. This wariness is of immediate concern to the 12 million Muslims who are citizens of European Union countries, five million of them in the Balkans,” High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch wrote at the beginning of his [article](#) published on Tuesday, November 20, 2001.

Editorials

Oslobodjenje and Dnevni Avaz

In the Oslobodjenje In Focus column, Mirko Sagolj wrote that BiH was falling deeper and deeper into an economic and social crisis, which at the same time meant a political crisis. The freshest message confirming this thesis has been recently delivered, according to Sagolj, by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. And this message reads: "The new donor's conference for BiH is being stopped all until BiH state and entity authorities have fulfilled 18 conditions set by the European Union." Sagolj concludes that if BiH is not established as a single state and if its authorities are not fulfilling the international obligations, it will not be in Europe, neither the current authorities will remain in power. They will be replaced by those who once were in the offices or even by the worse ones. In the second Oslobodjenje editorial, Emir Habul commented on the ceremony marking the tenth anniversary of the Croat Community of Herceg-Bosna. Habul emphasized that the ceremony had been painted in national-romantic colors and it paid all the tributes to the late Herceg-Bosna founder Mate Boban, whose policy was condemned by all relevant international factors. He concludes that it would be too much to expect those who participated in this policy to now distance themselves from the Herceg-Bosna achievements. Husein Orahovac commented in the Avaz Commentary of the Day on the too slow process of the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court's decision on the equal constitutional status of all three peoples in the entire BiH's territory. He concludes that even those who really care about the State of BiH have been becoming more and more tired of so long waiting. According to Orahovac, this might produce disastrous consequences.

Jutarnje Novine: Petritsch is late

Written by Vanja Ilicic

BiH got its Election Commission by the decision of the High Representative. By this, one of a large number of pre-conditions for holding the next elections on time has finally been fulfilled. But, it is still about neither domestic nor the permanent commission. Although, with a series of compromises, the BiH Permanent Election Law was adopted, the fact is it is not complete, as some of its provisions are of a temporary nature. In this way, the Law initially stipulated that the Election Commission was composed of seven members (two Bosniaks, two Serbs, two Croats and one representing the others), but later on it was specified that, by the end of the High Representative's mandate in BiH, the Commission would be composed of four BiH national and three members representing the international community. The national members are being nominated by the Commission for the Appointment of the BiH State Court Judges, and elected by the BiH House of Representatives. The Law foresees that if the Election Commission members are not appointed by September 15, 2001 (according to the aforementioned procedure), they will be appointed by the High Representative. It is more than obvious that the domestic institutions had not done their job within the deadline. However, the reaction of the High Representative came with a great lateness of two months...The question is why Wolfgang Petritsch decided to remind his BiH partners on who is the senior partner at the time when BiH institutions have at last started to fulfill their own obligations? Petritsch should also be reminded on a fact that the adoption of the amendments to the entity Constitutions on time, which is the process being carried out too slow thus far, has the most important influence on holding the next election within the set deadlines. It will be therefore interesting to see what will be the reaction if in this sense nothing is done by December 15 this year, which is the latest deadline for

completing the job set at the last inter-entity coordination meeting in Banja Luka.