OHR Bulletin 2 – May 13, 1996

No. 2, issued May 13, 1996

Table of Contents

1. Banja Luka
2. Elections
3. Freedom of Movement
4. Human Rights
5. Refugee & Humanitarian Affairs
6. Media Development
7. Economic Reconstruction
8. Brussels

Banja Luka

The High Representative, Carl Bildt, was in Banja Luka for the whole of last week, opening the OHR office in the city and conducting an extensive programme of meetings and consultations.

Mr Bildt held talks with the Prime Minister of Republika Srpska (RS), Rajko Kasagic, and with the Mayor of Banja Luka, Predrag Radic. There were also meetings with religious community leaders, with the Serb Intellectual Forum, and with the Association of the Parents of Missing Persons of the RS.

Visitors to Banja Luka who called on Mr Bildt included Mr. Prlic, the Foreign Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH), Mrs Ogata, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs Rehn, the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, and Mr Cotti, the Chairman in Office of the Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

There were also visits by John Kornblum, US Assistant Secretary of State, and Baroness Chalker, UK Minister for

Overseas Development. Mr Bildt went to Belgrade in the course of the week for meetings with President Milosevic of Serbia and Mr Ivanov, Russian first Deputy Foreign Minister.

In a joint press statement with Prime Minister Kasagic at the end of the week, Mr Bildt stated that the strong international presence in Banja Luka had revealed the benefits that could flow to the people of the RS from contacts with the world, provided there was full implementation of all the terms of the Peace Agreement.

Mr Bildt also chaired a political roundtable in Banja Luka with opposition leaders from both RS and the Federation.

Before leaving on 10 May Mr Bildt opened the first session in Banja Luka of the Joint Civilian Commission North West, bringing together political figures from the Entities with representatives of the international agencies.

Another roundtable organised and chaired by OHR during Banja Luka week involved the participation of editors, journalists and representatives of print and broadcast media from the two Entities.

All of these events were well covered by the local media. Mr Bildt gave a number of press briefings, and interviews with TV Banja Luka and Radio Big. The only point which was not fully reported by the same media was Mr Bildt’s message that if certain sections of the leadership continued to isolate Republika Srpska from the outside world then they would be the ones to blame for the people not receiving the economic development assistance which they would receive if there were full compliance with the Peace Agreement.

The HR Office in Banja Luka is headed by Tim Clifton, formerly with the European Community Monitoring Mission. It is located on the first floor of the UNHCR building in the heart of Banja Luka. The current telephone number is: (381-78) 34 230.

Elections

Representatives from the RS municipalities of Banja Luka, Prijedor and Gradiska and representatives of the Federation municipalities of Kljuc, Drvar and Sanski Most have agreed to work towards setting up Local Election Commissions in their respective areas. The agreement was reached at the first Joint Civilian Commission North West meeting in Banja Luka on 10 May, chaired initially by Carl Bildt and subsequently by his Principal Deputy Michael Steiner.

Freedom Of Movement

The RS authorities have signed on last week to the UNHCR-developed plans to facilitate cross-Entity movements of displaced persons and of refugees on assessment visits to their places of origin. The Federation authorities had already accepted these regulations. The High Representative, Carl Bildt, had addressed the BH, RS and Federation Prime Ministers in support of this UNHCR move.

The UNHCR has established an inter-entity bus service between the Sarajevo suburbs of Ilidza, on the Federation side, and Lukavica, on the Republika Srpska side, starting on 7 May. Although only a small number of passengers have so far used this service, many have expressed interest in travelling on the bus in the future. No incidents were registered. The bus, which carries UNHCR markings and UNHCR registration plates is driven by a local driver and escorted by another UNHCR vehicle. Neither IFOR nor the UN International Police Force were requested to provide direct escorts for the bus.

This service is available five times a day but may increase depending on future demand and until such time as local buses are able to run freely without assistance from UNHCR. Other routes are also planned in the Sarajevo area.

Earlier, UNHCR had announced that an agreement had been

reached with the RS authorities for the setting up of a number of cross-entity bus services along the following routes: Banja Luka – Zenica, Tuzla – Brcko, Visegrad – Foca, Mostar – Nevesinje and Banja Luka – Drvar.

Human Rights

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) lifted on 8 May provisional arrest warrants for six prisoners accused of war crimes by the Parties. This move is consistent with the special review process devised by the OHR in consultation with ICTY. The prisoners, four RS-held and two held by the BH authorities, were released later the same day. RS authorities also released unilaterally two individuals who had been arrested in early March near Nevesinje in South East Bosnia-Herzegovina

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Jose Ayala-Lasso visited Sarajevo 6-8 May as part of a tour through the region with stops in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Eastern Slavonia. In addition to meetings with representatives of the international implementing organisations, the High Commissioner met with BH President Izetbegovic, Federation President Zubak, and RS National Assembly President Krajisnik.

Recent OHR Human Rights Co-ordination Centre activities included the monthly Human Rights Task Force meeting, the launching of an initiative to address discriminatory property legislation, efforts to implement the "rules of the road" governing the detention of persons suspected of having committed war crimes and bi-weekly meetings to co-ordinate responses to specific human rights hot spots.

The Human Rights Chamber, set up under the Peace Agreement, convened its second session on 7 May; the Chamber's judges continue to review draft rules of procedure. The Ombudsperson has published rules of procedure and began accepting complaints in late March. With the assistance of

intergovernmental organisations, complaint forms and “How To” guides in Bosnian and English are being distributed throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. To date, the Ombudsperson has compiled 70 provisional files, including 12 registered cases. An international appeal for funding for the Human Rights Commission (both the Ombudsperson and the Chamber) was launched in January.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has conducted a training course on International Humanitarian Law for the senior officers of the 1st Corps of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The goal of the three-day-long training was to acquaint the officers with international laws governing warfare, while emphasising the necessity of limiting the suffering of civilians during times of military conflict.

Refugee And Humanitarian Affairs

Members of the Working Group on issues of missing persons in Bosnia-Herzegovina have agreed that the families of missing persons should be encouraged to fill in tracing requests at their local Red Cross office as a way of helping determine the fate of those declared missing. The agreement was reached at the third meeting of the Working Group on 7 May.

The Working Group comprises representatives of the signatories of the Peace Agreement, the ICRC and the Office of the High Representative.

ICRC has distributed vegetable seeds to 20,000 families in Bosnia-Herzegovina over the course of the last – months/weeks. In the Sarajevo area, seeds were distributed to 8,000 families and plans are afoot for the ICRC to distribute preservation kits for the plants over the coming few months.

Media Development

A meeting of broadcast editors and journalists from the

Republika Srpska and the Federation took place on 8 May in Banja Luka under the auspices of the OHR. The meeting, which took the form of a roundtable, brought together editors and representatives of the main print and broadcast media from the two Entities, both official and independent. The discussion, at most times both open and frank produced an exchange of opinions and ideas which was encouraging for the quality of the argument. A number of issues were discussed, including the technical deficiencies facing the broadcasters around the country, the possibility of exchanging programming and plans for covering the election campaign.

Much attention was given to the continued application by the media, especially state broadcasters on both sides, of the rhetorical jargon of war, manifest in its mildest form in the use of terms such as “the Serb entity” and the “Muslim-Croat Federation”. Although the participants agreed that professionalism should be the principal criterion for the work of journalists throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, it remains to be seen whether the media on both sides will demonstrate the courage, responsibility and maturity necessary to maintain these standards.

The OHR continues to work with a number of independent broadcasters, donors and other bodies, to develop and implement projects which aim to provide the necessary technical means to facilitate setting up an independent TV network. This is done with a view to producing a pluralist media environment for the the elections period, and beyond.

The Media Experts Commission (MEC) met for the second time on Friday 10 May in Sarajevo with OSCE in the chair. Plans were presented for using a number of NGOs to bolster the regional OSCE structure with the aim of providing a country-wide monitoring and evaluation of the media. The first reports are already coming in and will be used to determine whether conditions exist for the conduct of free and fair elections as far as the media landscape is concerned.

Economic Reconstruction

The European Union and the Government of the RS signed on 7 May an agreement providing a package of aid for a number of agricultural projects. Under this agreement, signed by RS Prime Minister Rajko Kasagic and EU envoy Donato Chiarini, the European Union will provide around $ 1 million worth of pesticide and fertilisers for RS farmers. The accord also envisages giving $ 700,000 worth of animal feed and supplement for two large state-owned meat farms in the Banja Luka area as well as $ 250,000 worth of equipment for revitalising cattle breeding in the RS.

A new programme to support local NGOs has been launched by the European Union. The programme, entitled EU NGO Programme for Promoting Social and Democratic Development in Bosnia-Herzegovina is open to NGOs located in Bosnia-Herzegovina and managed by Bosnians . It will finance specific projects within a very wide range of activities, including, *inter alia,* human rights, media, health, community development and parliamentary practice.

Grants of up to 28.000 DM will be awarded to projects selected by the Office of the European Commission in Sarajevo following an evaluation by a team of experts. The deadline for receipt of applications is June 30th. And applications should be addressed to:

Office of the European Commission to Bosnia- Herzegovina, Publishing House ‘Svjetlost’, # 3 M. Kantardzica str., Sarajevo.

It is hoped that successful projects should have received funding and be operational before September. Additional information is available and application forms are available through the Sarajevo office of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) which will be administrating the Programme on behalf of the European Commission Office, at one

of the following number:

Tel. (387-71) 670-823 and Fax (387-71) 670-826

IFOR in the meantime continues with activities of providing assistance to civilian agencies involved in aid or reconstruction projects. Some IFOR-driven civil projects for the past reporting period include:

1. Four IFOR Civil Military Co-operation Unit (CIMIC) technicians have assisted in the restoration of a pharmacy in Bosanski Petrovac.
2. CIMIC assistance was also provided in repairing an X-ray machine at the Cazin hospital.
3. IFOR's CIMIC continues to provide assessments to many governmental and non-governmental organisations and agencies to help them determine the economic conditions of a number of communities and municipalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These assessments are ongoing and the most recent ones include Gorazde, Mrkonjic Grad, Trnovo and Jasenica, among others. Business officials in Tuzla have identified commercial phone lines across the zone of separation as their single most important priority. The Multinational Division North CIMIC unit is working with RS authorities and communication authorities to establish cross- ZOS PTT.

Brussels

- Dame Pauline Neville-Jones attended a meeting of the international Contact Group on Bosnia-Herzegovina, held at political director level in Frankfurt on Sunday 5 May. The international Contact Group on BH is composed of the Governments of France, Germany, the UK, Italy, Russia and the US.
- Ambassador Martin Lutz met with the Hungarian Mission in Brussels and discussed the problems facing the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina and agreed an early visit by OHR

to Vojvodina and Budapest.

Looking Ahead

- **13 May:** General Affairs Council, Brussels. European Foreign Ministers meet to discuss Bosnia-Herzegovina. Carl Bildt will participate in the discussions.
- **13 May:** Carl Bildt to address NATO ambassadors meeting at a session of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels.
- **13 May:** UNHCR meeting on refugees in Geneva
- **14 May:** Federation Forum in Washington
- **15 May:** NATO Secretary – General, Xavier Solana, to visit Banja Luka.

The OHR Bulletin is produced by the Public Affairs Department of the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo and aims to give an overview of what is happening on the ground in the civilian implementation of the Dayton Agreement. Suggestions and contributions are welcome and should be addressed to the Public Affairs Department of the Office of the High Representative in Sarajevo (387-71) 447 275 ext. 562. Callers from outside BH dial via Brussels switchboard: Tel. (32-2) 737 7000 & Fax (32-2) 737 7901