

OHR Bulletin 24 - November 8, 1996

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Presidency Meetings

- The fourth session of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) met at the National Museum in Sarajevo on 1 November. Discussions on the formation of the common institutions, in particular the Council of Ministers, continued. A [statement](#) released following the meeting

sharply condemned all cases of destruction of houses in both the Federation and the Republika Srpska (RS), and urged the responsible authorities to take strong measures against any such actions. The Presidency announced its support for the activities of associations dealing with problems of displaced persons, refugees and missing persons.

- The Presidency met again at the Electro-technical Faculty in Lukavica on 5 November for its fifth session. The report of the Working Group on the Organisation of the Council of Ministers was considered, although no agreement was reached on the structure of the Council of Ministers or the function of the Chair. It was decided that this issue would be further discussed at the next session. After considering the report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jadranko Prlic, on the staffing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Embassies and Consulates of BH, preliminary views were exchanged on the distribution of posts in accordance with the Constitution. Preparations for the 14 November meeting in Paris were also considered and it was concluded that the previously appointed Working Group would continue its preparatory work on the draft text of the Joint Platform for the next session.

Other points agreed by the Presidency included the following:

1. The Presidency adopted the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Presidency and agreed to elaborate further provisional rules in collaboration with the OHR.
2. The Presidency expressed its extreme concern about the illegal evictions in both the Federation and the RS and urged the responsible authorities to take energetic measures against such occurrences.
3. Members of the Working Group for the Preparation of the 1997 budget of BH were appointed.
4. The Presidency noted the frequent employment of incorrect references to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the two entities. They requested all authorities to employ the proper terms: "*Bosnia and Herzegovina*", the "*Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*" and "*Republika Srpska*".

Federation Assembly

Both Houses of the Federation Assembly met separately in Sarajevo on 6 November for their respective constituent sessions. The 140 member House of Representatives elected Abdulah Konjicija (SDA) as its preliminary President and Stjepan Mikic (HDZ) as Vice President. The House of Peoples met later in the day, electing Mariofil Ljubic (HDZ) as its President and Mirsad Ceman (SDA) as Vice President. The Federal Assembly meetings resulted in the adoption of the Federation flag and coat of arms and election of the delegation of Federation members for the BH House of Peoples.

Steering Board

The Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) met in Brussels on 7 November under the Chairmanship of the High Representative, Carl Bildt. The meeting concentrated on preparations for the Steering Board Ministerial meeting in Paris the following week and the full PIC in London on 4-5 December. Mr. Bildt described the process of forming the Joint Institutions as moving forward "*millimetre by millimetre*" but said he was "*cautiously optimistic*" about progress.

Right To Return

- The Working Group on Return and Reconstruction in the Zone of Separation (ZOS) held its second meeting under the chairmanship of Principal Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Michael Steiner. The meeting was attended by representatives from OHR, UN IPTF, IFOR/ARRC, UNHCR and the European Commission. Ambassador Steiner underlined the consensus of the international community to support the Procedure to Return to the ZOS as a priority. IFOR/ARRC informed of the reduction of bombing incidents since the recent high-level interventions and Mr. Steiner's visit to Prijedor and Drvar. It was agreed to begin work on a comprehensive data base on the present situation of villages in the ZOS and their potential return capacities and to co-ordinate further steps to operationalise international efforts to facilitate return and reconstruction in the ZOS. This serves the double aim of making return possible in a part of BH for which the international community bears a special responsibility and to transform the ZOS from a band of devastation into a zone of co-operation, reducing the mental barrier against inter-Entity contacts and movements.
- UNHCR reported that as of 2 November, the three Commissions for Returns to the ZOS established for Brcko, Mahala and Jusici had processed more than 600 applications of individuals wishing to return to their homes. A number of approved applicants have already moved back and started work on repairing their homes. The Commission for Doboje began work on 1 November and approved 90 applications for returns to the villages of Svetlica and Stanici Rijeka as of 5 November. The Lopare Commission will begin its work on 7 November, with others being established in the coming weeks. The procedures for assessing approval are a direct result of the 15 October meeting held in the OHR which addressed the issue of the right of refugees to return to their homes in the ZOS in a safe and orderly manner.

The UNHCR is also developing proposals for funding of reconstruction work in some priority villages in the ZOS which will be submitted to the European Commission for consideration.

IFOR

On November 7, IFOR Commander Admiral Joseph Lopez handed over his duties to General William Crouch at a ceremony held in Sarajevo Airport. The ceremony was attended by the Secretary-General of NATO, Javier Solana, and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, George Joulwan as well as Members of the BH Presidency, Mr. Izetbegovic, Mr. Zubak and Mr. Krajisnik. Lopez, Crouch, Solana and Joulwan discussed the future status of IFOR with the Presidency Members at a meeting held after the ceremony.

Human Rights

- The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) issued a statement on 30 October calling on all Parties to comply with their obligation to immediately arrest indicted war criminals, and appealed to the international community to "*take appropriate measures to see its own decisions enforced*". UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Elisabeth Rehn echoed the Tribunal's statement on the same day. Carl Bildt, the High Representative, made clear that he believed instruments should be found to bring indicted war criminals to the Hague. Those who had contributed to the creation of the ICTY must ensure that continuing non-compliance did not make a complete mockery of the international community.
- UN IPTF Commissioner Fitzgerald wrote to the RS Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Dragan Kijac, on 31 October to demand that the RS authorities act immediately to arrest and surrender to the Hague any RS police officers who have been indicted by ICTY. The Commissioner told a press

conference that UN IPTF had assigned a senior officer to investigate whether four indicted war criminals named in a recent media report were currently serving in the RS police force, and to clarify why information had not been passed through the UN IPTF reporting chain in a more timely manner.

- Commissioner Fitzgerald wrote again to Mr. Kijac on 4 November expressing concern about reports that the former Prijedor police chief, Simo Drljaca still appeared to be working in an official capacity at the Prijedor Security Centre. Drljaca, who was to be relieved of his duties following an armed confrontation with IFOR troops on 16 September, has been seen by IPTF inside the Security Centre and driving a police car since his reported replacement. Human Rights Watch report that Mr. Drljaca is believed to be responsible for serious human rights violations in the Prijedor area both during and after the war.
- The Principal Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Michael Steiner, convened a principals-level Human Rights Task Force (HRTF) meeting on 7 November to discuss plans for human rights implementation and co-ordination efforts for 1997. Senior representatives of OSCE, UN IPTF, UN Civil Affairs, UNHCR, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, ECMM, ICRC, IFOR and the Commission on Human Rights ([Annex 6](#)) discussed human rights priorities and objectives for the coming months, including institution-building, NGO support, training, public information, rule of law initiatives, and monitoring activities, among other issues. A broad consensus was reached concerning the need to better integrate human rights activities of the international community at an operational level and to enhance mechanisms to address non-compliance with the human rights provisions of the Peace Agreement.
- UN Civil Affairs is looking into reports that Serb men between the ages of 16 - 60 in the Ilidza area have been receiving pre-draft interview notices from the local Federation Defence Department. UN staff have been visited by several men who say that they have been summoned for "*discussions*" about military service duties and were notified that failure to respond could be actionable under Federation military decrees. Local Serb community organisations claim that the notices are intended to increase pressure on Serbs remaining in the Sarajevo area.
- UN IPTF report that minority groups and opposition party members continue to be threatened in both Entities of BH. Recent incidents of intimidation have occurred in Teslic, Ripac, Livno, Cazin, Vares, Zenica, and Maglaj as well as the Sarajevo suburbs of Vogosca and Ilidza. The increased tensions in Mostar reported by international organisations in recent weeks remain of particular concern.

Humanitarian Affairs

- The Dayton Property Commission for Real Property Claims of Displaced Persons and Refugees will begin on 11 November to process claims of temporary residents in three newly established offices in Sarajevo, Lukavica and Mostar. A press release issued by the Commission this week encouraged temporary residents residing in Sarajevo, Lukavica, Capljina, Stolac or Neum to make an application to obtain their property back. The Commission deals with all kinds of property and all types of property rights, including ownership, lawful possession and occupancy rights. Anyone who lost possession of their real property is entitled to make a claim with the Commission. More Commission offices are expected to be established throughout BH in the coming months to deal with the multitude of claims.
- On 6 November the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, together with the Red Cross of BH, launched their winter campaign. The campaign, which focuses its efforts on the most needy, seeks to encourage people to visit their vulnerable neighbours and to help with essential tasks during the winter. A variety of activities and

initiatives under the common heading “*Help Can’t Wait*” are included in the campaign which will be supplemented by the distribution of Winter Survival Kits and by the establishment of additional Mobile Red Cross Teams. Donors funding these activities include the Red Cross Societies and governments of Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and Italy.

Constitutional Court

The President of the European Court of Human Rights recently announced the appointment of Mr. Hans Danelius, Professor Louis Favoreu and Professor Joseph Marko as the international members of the Constitutional Court of BH. The announcement follows consideration of the nominations by the BH Presidency on 29 October.

Economic Issues

- A recent statement released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the Government of BH, in cooperation with the World Bank, has created an agency for the purpose of supervising the disbursement of donors’ funds in the reconstruction programme. The agency will serve as a preventive measure against any potential cases of corruption whilst seeking to maintain control of the disbursement of the donors’ funds towards reconstruction of BH, including a utilisation of funds by both national and international subjects. The agency will be composed of national and foreign experts and its activities will be financed by the Netherlands Government.
- On 5 November, at the electrical substation in Jablanica, Baroness Chalker, UK Minister for Overseas Development, marked the return to service of the 220kv line by energising the critical section between Jablanica and Mostar. She was assisted by Canadian Ambassador Serge Marcoux and several Japanese officials including Mr. Nishada, Deputy Director of the Economic Cooperation Bureau. This represents part of a series of inter-Entity power projects developed under the UK Initiative with co-funding from the Japanese and Canadian Governments.

Media Issues

- In a trial against the opposition weekly newspaper, Alternativa which was monitored by the OHR, OSCE, UN IPTF and other organisations, the Dobož Court on 7 November passed sentence on two editors. One of the editors was found not guilty and the other was given a one month suspended sentence and fined 200 dinars. The RS Minister for Veterans Affairs and the General Director of PTT Dobož had accused Alternativa’s two editors of libel relating to a 17 July article allegedly implicating the local SDS branch in a campaign to disrupt opposition political party activities prior to the national elections. The article was, in fact, a communiqué by the President of the Municipal Council, an SPRS member, which was printed in full by Alternativa. The Glas Srpski printing house in Banja Luka suspended publication of Alternativa on 31 October after the paper covered the company’s refusal last month to continue printing the independent newspapers Novi Prelom and Nezavisine Novine for “*technical reasons.*”

In an effort to bolster the independent press, OHR, OSCE and ECMM are cooperating in support of an initiative to launch an independent and financially self-sustaining publishing house in the RS which would be run by a board composed of international and local representatives. The proposed publishing house is seen as a viable long-term means of guaranteeing the presence of alternative media in the RS. International donors are already funding several independent media projects in the RS and are expected to also support the new printing house.

- TV-IN continues to broadcast its programmes on both sides of the inter-Entity boundary line. Its half-hour news programme, TV-INFO, which is produced at the central hub in Sarajevo but draws on reports from all of the network stations, is now watched in all of the main urban centres in BH. The correspondent team of Bosnian Serb journalists in Banja Luka is being built up under the guidance of an experienced Swedish producer, Alberto Herskowitz.

Looking Ahead

12 and 13 November:

Sir Arthur Watts, special negotiator for succession issues, will meet in a plenary session with delegations of all five States in Brussels to continue discussions on succession issues.

14 November:

PIC Steering Board Meeting at the Ministerial level, Paris.

4 - 5 December:

Full Meeting of the PIC, London

See our [*Chronology*](#) for a full list of activities

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, Fax (387-71) 447 420. Callers from outside BH dial via Brussels switchboard: Tel. (32-2) 737 7500 & Fax (32-2) 737 7501