OHR Bulletin 25 – November 15, 1996

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Peace Implementation Council

The Peace Implementation Council (PIC) held a Steering Board Meeting at the Ministerial level in Paris on 14 November. The meeting, chaired by the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, was a major step towards defining the principles for civilian consolidation of the peace process implemented in BH since the signing of the Peace Agreement on 14 December 1995. Attending the meeting were Ministers of Foreign Affairs, or representatives from various countries and leading international organisations, as well as the three Member Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), Alija Izetbegovic, Kresimir Zubak and Momcilo Krajisnik, and signatories to the Peace Agreement, the Foreign Ministers of Croatia and of the Federal Republic of Yugolslavia.

The conclusions of the Steering Board and of the Presidency of BH focused on a thirteen point priority plan for the consolidation period with emphasis on:

1. Regional Stabilisation
2. Security
3. Human Rights
4. Democratisation
5. Elections
6. Freedom of Movement
7. Refugees and Displaced Persons
8. War Crimes
9. Reconstruction
10. Market Economy
11. Reconciliation

12. Education
13. Mine Removal

The two-year consolidation period will be divided into action plans of twelve months each, with a review at the mid-term. Each action plan will be prepared, for approval by the PIC or its Steering

Board, by the High Representative, in close consultation with the BH authorities, as well as the principle institutions involved in implementing the Peace Agreement.

In its conclusions the PIC emphasised the link between the availability of international financial assistance and the degree of compliance and active participation by the BH authorities the in implementation of the Peace Agreement. The BH Presidency reaffirmed its commitments to the peace process and undertook, as a high priority, to expedite the establishment of all joint institutions provided for in the Constitution.

The PIC also recognised the need for the High Representative to continue to perform his tasks throughout the entire consolidation period and that reinforcement of certain tasks would be necessary.

- In his address to the PIC, the High Representative, Carl Bildt, described the meeting as *"an important milestone [which] marks the beginning of the end of the first crucial year of peace implementation. And it marks the entry into the consolidation period over the next two years which we must all commit ourselves to"*. He outlined what he believed to be the challenges which lay ahead and the commitments which had to be made in order to meet those challenges. Reminding the Parties of BH that *"the Peace Agreement is not an ŕ la carte menu where you can choose what you like. It was, is and remains a package deal where full implementation is what*

counts", he added that the Presidency of BH would have to commit itself fully to that principle. "*The time for political trench-warfare over prestige or details*" was over, he said, adding that the time now was for "*political bridge-building and statesmanship for the good of all parts of the country*". Concluding that the international community had declared its willingness to help, Mr. Bildt stressed the importance of the efforts of the BH Parties themselves. "*Together we can achieve what might truly deserve the name peace*", he said.

Presidency Meetings

- The Presidency of BH held its sixth session in Sarajevo on 8 November. According to a statement released following the meeting, agreement on general competencies of the Council of Ministers was reached, although no agreement on the organisation of the Council was achieved. Presidents Alija Izetbegovic and Kresimir Zubak agreed on the proposal of organisation of the Council of Ministers according to the principle of 1 + 5. Member of the Presidency Momcilo Krajisnik proposed to nominate a Chair of the Council of Ministers and to establish the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry for Foreign Trade, in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement. Concerning other competencies of the Council of Ministers, he suggested that the Council should be given the task to analyse those competencies and to propose expansion of the number of ministries. The previously established Working Group was instructed to continue its efforts in harmonising opinion on this issue.

  There was broad agreement by the Presidency on the suggested text of the Presidency Platform for the upcoming Paris conference, although Chair Alija Izetbegovic noted that some important issues were missing. The Working Group responsible was instructed to

continue working on the text.

The Presidency supported the proposal of the Office of the High Representative regarding the establishment of telecommunication links between the common institutions.

- The seventh BH Presidency session was held in Sarajevo on 12 November. Discussions on the organisation of the Council of Ministers did not result in an agreement and it was decided that work on this issue would continue at the next session. The Platform for the Paris Conference which was prepared by the Working Group was adopted and it was decided that the Presidency members would, in their speeches in Paris, present their standpoints on those issues on which there is still a difference of opinion. The Working Group was instructed to continue with preparations for the London Conference in the same composition, which may be enlarged if necessary.
  Examining the letter by the High Representative, Carl Bildt, concerning the telecommunication links between the Presidency Members, the Presidency also instructed that symmetrical telephone links between the Presidency Members be immediately established, and instructed that the PTTs of the Federation and of Republika Srpska (RS) to complete the work without delay. The Presidency also instructed the relevant authorities and experts to participate in a meeting to be organized at OHR at the end of November, to agree on a detailed plan for the urgent implementation of the existing projects of the European Bank on Reconstruction and Development inter-linking the networks.

Right To Return

- Contrary to regulations laid down for the Procedure for Return and Reconstruction in Zone of Separation (ZOS) on 11 November several hundred Bosniaks crossed the Inter-

Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) between Celic and Koraj and occupied the village of Gajevi located within the ZOS. There was evidence to suggest that members of the BH Army were part of the incursion in which the Chief of Staff of the Celic based 254th Brigade was recognised. As a reaction RS police, also acting in violation of agreed rules, particularly Annex 1A of the Peace Agreement, by entering into the ZOS armed with long barrelled weapons, moved into the village the next day to search the people for weapons and drive them out. Firing broke out between the two group resulting in one death and several injuries.
As a reaction to the serious events in Gajevi the OHR, IFOR, UN IPTF and UNHCR sent a joint letter of protest to the Members of the BH Presidency, Alija Izetbegovic, Momcilo Krajisnik and Kresimir Zubak, the Federation President (Zubak) and the President of RS, Biljana Plavsic. The letter demanded: an immediate return of all individuals who participated in the incursion to return to the Federation; a strict respect on the ban of unauthorised weapons in the ZOS; no civilian or military action which could aggravate the situation; and a complete hold on further provocations, including the mining or burning of houses and the occupation of houses by people other than their owners.

The letter stated that until demands had been satisfactorily met and the situation calmed down, the Procedure for Return would be suspended for the entire ZOS, meaning that the International Commission would neither receive nor process any new or old applications. The letter concluded that the incidents of the 11 and 12 November had reconfirmed the importance of strict adherence of the authorities in both Entities to the Procedure and called upon the Presidents to issue necessary instructions to ministers and local authorities to fully cooperate with the Procedure, once

the suspension is lifted.

- IFOR announced on 14 November that a *"temporary restriction zone"* (TRZ) would be established in the region of Celic. The 35 km square zone will strictly prohibit the possession of all armament for civilian police, with the exception of sidearms, and all weapons for civilians. All active and reserve officers of the BH Army living in the TRZ will have to apply to IFOR for registration. The TRZ comes into effect at noon on 16 November.
  In further efforts to enforce the Peace Agreement and reduce the possibility of armed clashes, IFOR and IPTF raided an RS police station in Koraj on 13 November, confiscating weapons found and seizing them for destruction. In the early morning hours of 14 November another unannounced raid, this time on the BH Army 254 Brigade headquarters outside Celic, resulted in the confiscation of several hundred kalashnikovs and two five-tonne trucks of ammunition.

- UN IPTF report that a visit of Bosniaks from the Jablanica area to cemeteries in Croat-majority villages near Mostar was cancelled on 12 November after local police said they were unable provide security for the visitors. International organisations are following up with the local authorities to reschedule the visit. n International organisations reported that visits of Bosniaks to their former homes in Svjetlica, located in the ZOS near Doboj, scheduled for 9 and 10 November were cancelled after local authorities indicated that they could cause a *"reaction"* from the local population. The International Commission established for returns to the area has so far approved more than 200 applications of Bosniak displaced persons wishing to return to their homes in Svjetlica, Stanici Rijeka and other ZOS villages.

The body will continue to process applications despite the fact that on 6 November the RS representative delivered a letter from the Doboj authorities stating that they do not recognise the commission or its decisions, and will discontinue their cooperation with its work. UN Civil Affairs reported that RS authorities have recently started issuing *"certificates of occupancy"* to Serb displaced persons for uninhabited houses in the ZOS, including some in the Doboj area.

- UN IPTF report that three Bosniaks were injured after their vehicle was fired on as they drove through the village of Poljice, located in the ZOS near Doboj on 11 November. Thirty people armed with iron bars demonstrated against the return of Bosniaks to Poljice the following day. Tensions have been rising over the issue of Bosniak returns following the refusal of local RS authorities to cooperate with international organisations trying to facilitate this process.
- Members of the recently established Coalition for Return signed a memorandum on 7 November demanding determined implementation of the Peace Agreement and calling upon participants of the forthcoming Paris and London conferences to provide conditions for voluntary repatriation by ensuring the enforcement of property and occupancy rights, freedom of movement and protection of rights of minorities.

Freedom Of Movement

- The Mostar-Capljina bus-line, established under the auspices of the OHR, was stoned by a crowd as it entered Domanovice. The passengers on the bus were Bosniaks who were going to visit their houses in Opacici.
- UN IPTF received a complaint on 9 November from a man who said that he was sentenced to four days in prison after he refused to pay a 3,000 dinar fine to Federation

police in Srebrenik because his car, with license plates from the Croat-majority town of Orasje, was *"improperly registered"*. UN IPTF also received a complaint from two Serb women who said that the taxi they were riding in was stopped on 9 November by Federation police near Dobrinja who confiscated food items they had bought on the Federation side.

European Commission

The European Commission (EC) recently opened an EC antenna office in Banja Luka. Mr. Frank Marshall will act there as an envoy of Mr. Donato Chiriani, the representative of the European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European Commission also has ECHO and Customs and Fiscal Assistance offices in Banja Luka.

Economic Assistance

- The first meeting between the Chambers of Commerce from Bihac (Federation), and Banja Luka (RS), organized under the auspices of the OHR, took place in Banja Luka on October 17. Although much still remains to be done, the meeting was the first encouraging step towards establishing working relations between the regional Chambers.
- The World Food Programme (WFP) announced on 14 November that 25,000 metric tonnes of wheat which arrived last week would be distributed to flour mills in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka, Mostar and Bugojno over the next few weeks for milling and distribution as relief aid. A further US$ 1.2 million donation from the WFP to be used for the renewal of the Bihac mill is expected to arrive in the next few months.

Legal Issues

- The law-suit, submitted by the City Committee of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) Mostar against the EUAM Ombudsman's decision concerning alleged irregularities surrounding the Mostar municipal elections held in June, was rejected by the Supreme Court of the Federation of BH in Sarajevo. The Court ruled on 6 November that neither the Court itself, nor any other Federation court, was competent to judge on the matter.
- The Centre for Legal Aid to Women, an initiative of a group of Bosnian women lawyers in central Bosnia to provide legal assistance to women in the region, opened in Zenica. The Centre will also conduct activities to eliminate discrimination against women and to prevent and respond to violations of women's rights.

Media Issues

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) wrote to President Momcilo Krajisnik on 7 November expressing concern about the recent conviction of the managing editor of the newspaper Alternativa. Last week the Doboj court found the editor-in-chief not guilty but gave the managing editor a suspended one month sentence and fined him for court fees after finding him guilty of libel concerning an article published in Alternativa in July. The article was said to have implicated SDS officials in the blocking of opposition party meetings. Calling the conviction *"an egregious violation of press freedom"* the CPJ condemned the *"misuse of libel laws by public officials in order to shield the government from criticism in the press"* and called for a reversal of the conviction, and for the sentence and charges to be dropped. Alternativa will also appeal the court's decision.

Looking Ahead

18 November:
Return and reconstruction in the Zone of Separation Working Group Meeting
26-27 November:
PIC Steering Board Meeting, Bonn
4-5 December:
Full Meeting of the PlC, 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