OHR Bulletin 27 – December 02, 1996

No. 27, issued December 02, 1996

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Joint Institutions

- The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) reached an agreement on 30 November 1996, based on a proposal from the Office of the High Representative, on the initial organisation of the Council of Ministers, the main ministerial body among the joint institutions in BiH.
  The agreement stipulates that the Council will be led by two Co-Chairmen, one from the Bosniac people and one from the Serb people, who will rotate weekly in chairing the Council and performing the duties of the Chair. There will be a Vice Chair of the Council, from the Croat people, a Minister for Foreign Affairs, also from the Croat people, a Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications, from the Serb people, and a Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, from the Bosniac people. In addition, each Minister shall have two Deputies from the other two peoples.

  It was agreed that the Council would meet at least weekly, with the Co-Chairmen alternating at meetings.

  The High Representative Carl Bildt greeted the agreement as *"a sensible if overdue step forward"*. Speaking to journalists following the Presidency meeting in Sarajevo , the Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Michael Steiner described the structure as one that *"takes into account that after the war there is much mistrust"* adding that this was, nonetheless, *"the only way to go"*.

- At the same meeting, the Presidency agreed to support an earlier invitation for a visit to Sarajevo by Pope John Paul.
- Moslem and Croat members walked out of the Republika

Srpska National Assembly last week when the Bosnian Serb deputies elected to deny them voting rights. The deputies justified their act saying that because the Moslem and Croat parliamentarians, from the SDA, Party for BiH and the Joint List, had refused to take an oath of allegiance to the Republika Srpska, they had no right to participate in the assembly's decision making. The Moslem and Croat deputies had objected to elements of the Solemn Declaration which related to the Serbs' traditional Orthodox Christian faith.
The Deputy HR, Michael Steiner, described this action as *"unlawful"* and *"unconstitutional"*. In a letter to the RS Assembly Speaker Dragan Kalinic, Ambassador Steiner demanded the revocation of this move adding that *"no democracy in the world tries to impose an oath with a religious commitment on parliamentarians who cannot subscribe to this specific commitment and forbids them otherwise to fulfill their parliamentarian rights and duties"*.

OSCE

On 29 November, the President of the RS Biljana Plavsic signed in Banja Luka an agreement for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to supervise the preparation and conduct of elections for the municipal governing authorities. The signature followed consultations with the OSCE Head of Mission Ambassador Robert Frowick.

President Izetbegovic and President Zubak, on behalf of BiH and the Federation of BiH respectively, had already signed the agreement on 22 October 1996.

The wording of the agreement is as follows:

"In order to promote free, fair and democratic elections and to lay the foundations for representative government

on all levels throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in accordance with the General Framework Agreement on Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska have agreed to request the OSCE to extend its mission, and also that of the Provisional Election Commission on the basis of the provisions defined in Annex 3, until the end of 1997 so as to supervise the preparation and conduct of elections for the municipal governing authorities."

The High Representative, Carl Bildt, attended the OSCE Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, where he co-chaired a discussion on the activities of international organisations in BiH in 1997.

NATO

NATO ambassadors agreed on 27 November to a timetable for a follow-on force to replace the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) when its mandate expires on 20 December. The ambassadors agreed that the new force will stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina for no more than 18 months, with reviews every six months to decide needed troop levels. It had been previously agreed that the strength of the force would be approximately 30.000 troops. Speaking of the decision, Robert Hunter, the US ambassador to NATO said that the agreement *"reflects a recognition that NATO can continue to play a constructive role"*.

Brcko

The Government of the Republika Srpska has announced it has withdrawn from the Brcko arbitration process. In a letter dated 1 December to the President of the Brcko Arbitration Commission, Roberts Owen, RS Prime Minister Gojko Klickovic said the RS was *"canceling"* its decision

to name Dr. Vitomir Popovic its representative and member of the commission and accused Owen of being partial to the Federation in seeking a settlement.

Economic Assistance

The BiH Presidency reached an agreement during its session of 28 November regarding the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Presidency of BiH and the European Commission on European Union-funded economic reconstruction programmes in the amount of approximately 147 million ECU. President Izetbegovic signed the agreement on behalf of the three-member Presidency.

The grant will be used to fund five different programmes and projects, the details of which have yet to be negotiated. It was agreed that any objections to the allocation of the funds will be forwarded to the EU Ambassador to BiH Donato Chiarini, who together with the working group comprising Zlatko Hurtic, Drago Bilandzija and Spasoje Albijanic will settle the balance of the allocation of the funds and forward its proposal to the Presidency within 15 days.

United Nations

The United Nations launched an appeal last week for $544.7 million for activities in the former Yugoslavia during 1997, covering the rebuilding of homes and easing the return of refugees. The appeal, by 11 UN agencies, is for hmanitarian activities in BiH, Croatia, the FRY and Macedonia. $ 372 million are sought for Bosnia, where roughly two million people now receive aid.

A year after the signing of the Peace Accord, only 250.000 of the approximately 2 million displaced persons and refugees have returned to their homes. In a statement appealing for funds, the UN High Commissioner

for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata declared UNHCR's intention to make 1997 "the year of return and organised repatriation". UNHCR is seeking $236 million under the appeal. The agency intends to continue to encourage returns to 22 target areas in BiH, where considerable progress had been in rebuilding houses and water supply systems, as well as increase the number of such areas and efforts to protect returnees. "In cooperation with countries of asylum, UNHCR will facilitate the return of refugees from abroad", the statement said, adding that half of the $ 125 million budget for Bosnia would be focussed on persons returning from abroad.

War Crimes Tribunal

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague has passed its first sentence since it was set up by the UN Security Council in May 1993. Drazen Erdemovic, a Croat who confessed to taking part in the Bosnian Serb Army's killing of unarmed Moslems at the UN safe haven of Srebrenica in July 1995 was sentenced to 10 years in jail. Reading the verdict, presiding judge Claude Jorda said the three-judge panel had taken into account the accused's age, low military rank and "full and unconditional" cooperation with the prosecution.

Freedom of Movement

The Principals of the international organizations charged with implementing the Peace Accord in BiH have lifted the suspension of procedures for returns and reconstruction in the Zone of Separation on 26 November. The suspension was introduced following armed clashes between Bosniac returnees and RS police in the village of Gajevi in which one man was killed and several others wounded. The Principals communicated

their decision in a joint letter to the three Members of the Presidency, also taking the opportunity to remind them of their responsibilities in ensuring the strict compliance with the measures and cooperation of the relevant local authorities.

Refugees and Displaced Persons

The Coalition for Return met for the second time under the chairmanship of the Principal Deputy High Representative Ambassador Steiner in Mostar on 23-24 November. The meeting was attended by 60 representatives of displaced persons and refugees associations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and FRY.

The participants endorsed a declaration calling on displaced persons and refugees to join a broad movement for return, also expressing their conviction that people would only be able to return if they helped others to do the same.

The Coalition, comprising associations and communities in both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Bosanski Brod, Brcko, Capljina, Derventa, Drvar, Glamoc, Gradacac, Grahovo, Jajce, Modrica, Mostar, Prijedor, Samac, Sarajevo, Sanski Most, Stolac and Tuzla was set up against a backdrop of a recent escalation in the destruction of unoccupied houses through the systematic planting of mines and through burning and other practices calculated to prevent the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes.

Strongly condemning such acts of destruction, the Coalition adopted a working plan which includes, among other things, the establishing of fact-finding teams to investigate the conditions for return in particular areas and a strategy planning group which will make recommendations to international organizations and to

relevant authorities concerning the return of refugees and displaced persons, and which will be consulted regularly by the OHR in coordination with UNHCR.

Eleven representatives were nominated to coordinate the next meeting of the Coalition which will take place in three weeks time. The aim of this meeting will be to make operational the proposals for action that were endorsed in Mostar.

Human Rights

During her most recent mission to the region, from 21-27 November, the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Elisabeth Rehn visited Velika Kladusa, Bihac, Sanski Most, Prijedor, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Tuzla and Bugojno, where she was accompanied by the Federation Ombudsman. At a press conference in Sarajevo, Ms. Rehn drew attention to the failure of local police in many locations to properly uphold the rule of the law especially condemning the presence of indicted war criminals on the Prijedor police force. Referring to her visits to sites of recent problems in the Zone of Separation, the Special Rapporteur noted the lack of will to implement Annex 7 of the Peace Agreement. Ms. Rehn also met during her mission with a number of prisoners who have been held for unacceptable lengths of pre-trial detention.

Humanitarian Affairs

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) is currently updating its Directory of Humanitarian Organizations in former Yugoslavia. All non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian agencies who wish to be listed in the revised Directory are encouraged to complete and return a Directory Questionnaire by

December 9th. For a copy of the Questionnaire, please contact ICVA Sarajevo, 387 71 668 297/298. The updated version of the Directory will be released in mid-January 1997.

Media

The Open Broadcast Network/TVIN Governing Council met in Brussels 25 November to examine the current situation and discuss future perspectives for the network and its possible needs. The Council was briefed extensively on proposals, prepared by the Project Assistance Team (PAT), for the development of a centrally- run affiliate-based network with the network's News & Programming Director, Kosta Jovanovic, outlining programming ideas and plans, backed by a video presentation of the current output. A detailed budget will be developed before the end of the year, together with more detailed proposals on network structure. Also discussed was the progress achieved in setting up an affiliate station in the RS (Banja Luka) and plans for expanding coverage.

It was agreed that the PAT, in consultation with OHR, would continue to keep donors regularly updated on progress in building the new consolidated structure ahead of the new round of pledges for the second phase of the project which are likely to be sought at the next Governing Council meeting in January 1997.

Looking Ahead

2-3 December:
OSCE Summit, London
3-5 December:
Plenary Meeting on Succession Issues for the former

Yugoslavia, London

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