

OHR Bulletin 3 – May 20, 1996

No. 3, issued May 20, 1996

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Republica Srpska

Following the ratification by the Republika Srpska (RS) National Assembly of the removal of Mr. Rajko Kasagic from his post as RS Prime Minister, intense diplomatic activity was directed towards ensuring that there was no backtracking by the Republika Srpska government on its obligations under the Peace Agreement.

To this end, the High Representative, Carl Bildt, has demanded clear commitments from the RS leadership that there should be no obstruction of the implementation process and that all persons indicted by the International Tribunal for war crimes in the former Yugoslavia are removed from public office. A series of positive steps in that direction were noted over the past weekend, including undertakings regarding Mr. Karadzic. Firm guarantees of these undertakings were still expected at the beginning of the week.

Federation Forum

The Federation partners reached an agreement on a Federation Defence law which establishes a single Ministry of Defence and a joint command structure. The agreement was reached at the second plenary session of the Federation Forum which took place in Washington on 15 May upon invitation of U.S. Secretary of State Christopher. Participants included the President and the Vice President of the Federation, the Prime Ministers of the Federation and of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Foreign Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of Croatia, the Principal Deputy High Representative, and other senior officials.

Also discussed at the Forum were issues pertaining to economic recovery, elections, media, freedom of movement and institutional issues.

The Forum furthermore approved a draft agreement on the establishment of a Federation Implementation Council, for submission to the Federation Assembly at its next session. This Council is designed to overcome problems created by Federation officials who do not co-operate in the implementation of Federation institutions, who do not respect human rights or who seriously obstruct co-operation with the International Tribunal in The Hague.

Meanwhile, the establishment of Cantons progressed further: On 7 May the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, with Mostar as its capital, adopted its constitution and Government, naming Mr. Srecko Vucina as its first Prime Minister. On 17 May, the Central Bosnia Canton elected its Government, headed by Prime Minister Zeir Mlivo. The Central Bosnia canton, with Travnik as its capital, was the last to form a government.

Elections

The failure to establish all of the Local Election Commissions (LEC) in the Federation and the Republika Srpska continues to pose a major threat to the preparations for the elections. Without well- trained & prepared LECs, the voter registration process was unable to begin on schedule.

The provisional Election Commission has adopted papers on the Criteria for Polling Stations and the on the Disruption of the Voting Process, together with the Rules for Registered Independent Candidate Representatives and the Registered Political Party Representatives; and presented the recently adopted Rules and Regulations at the meeting of the Political Parties Consultative Council on May.

Media Development

The OHR is calling a donors conference on 22 May in Brussels to seek support for an initiative of a group of local independent broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina to

establish a self-supporting TV network. It is believed that this project will significantly improve the media situation in advance of the elections while a post-elections phase is designed to sustain the longer term drive towards pluralism and democracy development in the country.

The underlying principles of the project are: to provide broadest possible coverage of the voting population before the elections, and to guarantee broadcasting pluralism and democracy.

Economic Reconstruction

German Minister for Development and Co-operation, Mr. Spranger, inaugurated on 17 May two railway bridges in Mostar, the Neretva I and II bridges, North and South of the city, respectively. The EU was represented by the EU local representative and the European Commission Office to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The reconstruction of these bridges, financed by the German Government, constitutes the German contribution to the European Union Joint Action to repair the railway line Ploče-Mostar-Sarajevo.

The restoration of this railway line, costing a total of 6.6 million ECU, under the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) aims to revive the economy and support the Federation. It is expected that the first trains will begin connecting Ploče to Sarajevo next July.

The European Commission, represented by Ms. Maria Beccarelli, signed on 15 May a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Urbanism and Environment of the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the implementation of a Housing Programme to the value of US \$ 14 million. The programme has been designed by EC experts, in co-operation with IMG and the Ministry. The programme is part of the First Tranche of the EC

Essential Aid Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the main objective of which is to increase the stock of houses in two cantons: Gorazde and Central Bosnia. The programme, which will be implemented and monitored by the regional authorities, and by the EC through the participation of experienced NGOs, is expected to be carried out by local contractors.

The programme has been designed to assist the rehabilitation of houses with an average 30% degree of damage with an estimated cost of US \$ 6.000 per unit. Implementation of the EC programme will increase the stock of houses for immediate use by 2.300.

Secondary objectives of the project include:

- supporting local capacity within the construction sector,
- boosting local production and management,
- stimulating the private sector,
- promoting improved market conditions.

Human Rights

- A team of five from the UN Centre for Human Rights began an eight-day training programme for IPTF officers on Monday 13 May.

This specially designed "*train the trainers*" course will prepare IPTF monitors to train their colleagues on human rights issues, with guidance from training staff from the UN Centre for Human Rights.

- On 15 May, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia found insufficient evidence to warrant the detention of one prisoner held by the RS in Pale and a prisoner held by Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities in Sarajevo Central Prison. Both prisoners were released on 17 May, an encouraging illustration of the Parties continuing willingness to respect the findings of the Tribunal concerning persons arrested as war crimes

suspects.

- Human Rights Co-ordination Centre staff participated in an OSI-sponsored discussion on property legislation as it relates to return of refugees and displaced persons.
- The Human Rights Task Force property subcommittee has launched a joint effort to repeal or amend current property laws that infringe upon rights guaranteed in the Peace Agreement (Annexes 6 and 7).

Refugee And Humanitarian Affairs

The OHR participated in the 13 May meeting of the PIC Humanitarian Issues Working Group in Geneva, chaired by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Sadako Ogata.

The OHR expressed support for the UNHCR repatriation programme while stressing the significance of implementing the right of return to places of origin and freedom of movement. The OHR pointed out that these activities must be linked to reconstruction and employment-generating efforts of the international community to impact quickly and have the desired effect.

An Expert Group has been set up through the Office of the High Representative, bringing together the ICRC, the ICTY, the UN Special Rapporteur, the UN Expert on Missing Persons, IFOR and Physicians for Human Rights. The primary objective of the Group is to co-ordinate the efforts of these international mechanisms and institutions regarding to exhumation and missing persons.

The ICRC has also convened a Working Group on Missing Persons through which the parties are beginning to exchange information about persons reported missing to the ICRC. It is agreed that the first priority must be to determine the fate of missing persons and to communicate the findings to their families.

The local water boards in Donji Vakuf and Novi Travnik have reported that they suffer from shortages in equipment, spare parts and tools. The ICRC has consequently agreed to provide the two towns with all the tools and spare parts needed to repair the leaks on the water pipe line in order to ensure water quality and quantity for the whole population in the two municipalities.

Due to the break down of the filter station, the residents of Kakanj has been deprived of water for the last week. Within its emergency assistance program, the ICRC will provide more than 80 tones of appropriate quartz sand and other equipment to restore normal water supply.

More than 24,000 citizens of Maglaj are without water supply due to brake of the pumping station. In order to solve the problem as soon as possible, the ICRC will provide appropriate pumps and other equipment needed.

The ICRC will provide several kilometres of pipes for an alternative water distribution system in the area of Sije. The construction of the water distribution network in this small municipality was halted due to the breakout of war with most of the structure, but no water distribution lines, in place.

Mine Action Centre

The United Nations Mine Action Centre (MAC) was officially opened by COMARRC, Lt. Gen Sir Michael Walker on Monday 20 May. The MAC is the national co-ordination body for mine clearance for the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, co-ordinating the activities funded by donors and the government, ensuring value for money, monitoring contractual performance and acting as the national standards institute.

Regional Stabilization

Exchanges continue of updated information on the military

forces of the Federation and of the Republika Srpska subsequent to the D+120 deadline for withdrawal of forces and heavy weapons to cantonments and barracks. The last in the series of these exchanges of information took place at an official ceremony at the OSCE Mission headquarters in Sarajevo on 11 May.

Both Entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have exchanged plans for the deployment of major weapons systems during 1996. The exchange of information took place on 17 May with both sides indicating their willingness to co-operate further on fulfilling their obligation to exchange all information relating to weapons deployment.

Joint Bodies

The next meeting of the Joint Civilian Commission (JCC) North West is slated provisionally for 5 June although the place is yet to be determined.

The JCC North East Working Groups on Refugees and Economic Reconstruction are planned for the end of May.

Brussels

The High Representative Carl Bildt participated in the discussions during a meeting of European Foreign Ministers at the General Affairs Council, which took place in Brussels on 13 May.

Carl Bildt addressed NATO ambassadors meeting at a session of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, also on 13 May.

Looking Ahead

- **22 May:** Donors Conference for media development projects
- **24 May:** Peace Implementation Council Steering Board

session in Paris

- **25 May:** G8 Political Directors meeting in Paris

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 PA Dept of the OHR in Sarajevo: Tel. (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.