

OHR SRT News Summary, 10 February 1999

Headlines

- RS budget proposal for this year – KM 671 million
- Testimonies by international representatives on Brcko end in Vienna
- Negotiations in Rambouillet continue to focus on seeking political solution of the Kosovo crisis
- NATO preparing an operational plan for deploying military forces to implement agreement on Kosovo.

The 45th session of the RS Government took place in Banja Luka today with PM Dodik in the chair. The session included discussion on the RS budget proposal for 1999 which will now be submitted to the RS NA. "We discussed the feasibility of the budget proposal and decided to prepare a programme of measures and activities to be undertaken to ensure that there will be resources to implement the budget...We also believe that the programme for accommodating refugees still living in collective centres should be funded through a separate annex that would include sources of necessary resources and its concrete dynamics." The Government also adopted a report on the PM's recent visit to the U.S. and discussed the issue of Brcko. An announcement was also made on a planned revision of the RS Law on Religious Holidays.

2:16

The Brcko Arbitration Tribunal continued to meet in Vienna. Yesterday's round saw the last testimonies by international representatives. The head of the [UNHCR](#) Office in Tuzla was amongst those who testified and the Serb side had remarks regarding his testimony. The afternoon round saw testimonies by IPTF representatives. The first witness of the RS side is expected to appear before the Tribunal tomorrow.

1:21

The Secretary-General of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, Albert Roha, stated that the best solution to the Brcko issue would be to make it into a district. According to Roha, any different solution would be a bad solution as it would not allow for returns of DPs and refugees nor for economic development. Roha stressed that it would be good if the entire area, not only the town of Brcko, could be granted a special status in order to ensure normal communications.

0:35

After a lengthy and ardent discussion, the BiH PA House of Representatives, at their session today, adopted the Law on the BiH National Anthem. The lengthy discussion prior to the adoption focused on whether to accept the term of national anthem, as the request of RS representatives was not to include the word "national". A compromise was eventually reached according to which the title of the Law itself will contain the word "national" whereas the further text of it would only refer to it as "BiH anthem". At the proposal of a "Sloga" representative, Slavko Dokic, the HoR agreed that a new parliamentary procedure should be opened on the respective Laws on citizenship, coat of arms, flag and telecommunications, which the HR had declared as temporary valid laws. These will be discussed at the HoR next session.

2:25

A Co-chairman of the BiH CoM, Svetozar Mihajlovic, and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Gojko Milinkovic, today separately met with the U.S. Ambassador in BiH, Richard Kauzlarich. The meetings discussed the work of the CoM and the ways of improving it, the Madrid declaration and the current issues in the RS. The CoM is expected to be reconstructed in the next three months and the idea of proclaiming the building of joint institutions a district should be respected, Mihajlovic said.

1:10

The new RS PM designate today denied statements claiming that he had returned the mandate to President Poplasen and reiterated that his opinion would exclusively depend on the final position that would be taken by the SP RS and the "Sloga" Coalition. In a statement given in Brcko, Djokic said that his meeting with Westendorp had been differently interpreted by the media and that he personally believed that Dodik was the person who should be the head of the RS Government.

0:35

The Spokesperson for the RS SP, Igor Radojcic, at a press conference in Banja Luka today, stated that the final decision on whether Djokic was going to accept or refuse the mandate was going to be made at the first next session of the SP Main Board. Radojcic went on to add that Milorad Dodik was the only candidate of the "Sloga" Coalition. "However, Radojcic added, Dodik has still not been pronounced by President Poplasen, which is why members of "Sloga", in cooperation with other political factors, may have to work to try to find a solution of the issue, a solution that would go through. Radojcic stressed that the SP would like to see a break now during which the final solution could be found, regardless of what the solution would eventually be. "The SP needs to have further consultations and we need to have a break. The position of a member of Sloga does not necessarily have to be the position of the entire Coalition, and vice versa."

1:50

The Serb Coalition for the RS have released a public statement saying that the HR, Carlos Westendorp, had obviously taken over as the Spokesperson for the "Sloga" Coalition when he made a statement saying that the new RS PM designate, Petar Djokic, had not accepted the mandate vested in him by Poplasen. The statement went on to remind that the PM designate had stressed that the final decision would be made at the level of the SP RS and its partners. "This is a case of

the HR's direct interference with Sloga's internal affairs and is in violation of his mandate." The Serb Coalition further condemned Westendorp's statement describing Poplasen as a "Belgrade agent " and cited it as "being typical of totalitarian regimes and as repulsive for genuine democrats".

1:50

[NATO](#) is expected to adopt an operational concept and also an operational plan some time next week, on deployment of troops that will be in charge of monitoring and ensuring the implementation of the agreement on Kosovo, provided that such an agreement is eventually reached by the two sides currently in negotiations in Rambouillet.

0:48

Other Kosovo-related news

4:36

The RS Customs Administration have today confirmed to BETA that the foreign trade regime is currently being applied in the exchange of goods between the RS and the FRY, whereas custom fees on FRY domestic goods have remained unchanged.

0:29

A lengthy report on the effects of the recent decision by the RS Government to change the parity of the dinar to KM as reported in Trebinje, Banja Luka and Bijeljina. The report focuses on a possible increase of prices, both in dinars and KMs and reactions from clients. According to the report increases have occurred in BL, whereas no such reaction has been registered in Trebinje, where the dinar still remains the main currency. However, what has been noted there are shortages of different goods including excisable goods. In the area of Bijeljina, prices are mainly expressed in KMs and no changes have, therefore, been reported. The black-market exchange rate between the Yugo dinar and the KM there was 1:8.5 even before the decision by the RS Government

5:16

A two-day seminar organised by the RS Privatisation Direction and supported by US AID on public auctions in privatisation ended in Banja Luka today. After the seminar, participants will be put through a test and if successful they will be authorised to conduct auctions. As earlier planned, there will be five auction centres in the RS, Banja Luka, Doboje, Trebinje, Brcko, Bijeljina and Sokolac (or Pale). Privatisation through public auctions could possibly start as early as at the beginning of April.

1:59

The HR, Carlos Westendorp, met with respective representatives of the Serb Council of Citizens, the Croatian People's Council for BiH, the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals and the Association of Independent Intellectuals called "Circle

0:99

. After the meeting, Westendorp stated that representatives of the above NGOs had informed him about their respective activities aimed at ensuring the equality and constituency of the BiH nations. According to Westendorp, they also discussed initiatives related to the ongoing Brcko Arbitration process. "They presented their ideas and I told them that there was a Tribunal and that they should convey those ideas to it and I will respect whatever decision the Tribunal takes and I will have to implement that decision".

2:00

Federation-related news

1:41

False convertible markas have been registered and confiscated in the area of Bijeljina and then submitted to the local Public Security Centre for a criminal and technical investigation. The BiH Central Bank yesterday addressed a letter requesting that after the first check, the confiscated KMs should be forwarded to the Central Bank Treasury for their expert investigation.

2:00