OHR SRT News Summary, 8 February 1999

Headlines

- Arbitration for the area of Brcko commenced in Vienna – first day saw testimony by Supervisor Farrand
- Visit to the United States successful – assessment by PM Dodik
- Proposal by international mediators on solution of the Kosovo crisis considered in Rambouillet
- Many statesmen from across the world attend funeral of King Hussein

A session of the Arbitration Tribunal for the portion of IEBL running through the area of Brcko commenced in Vienna today. The next eight days will see presentations of arguments by legal and economic experts from the RS and the BiH Federation who will be trying to get the town of Brcko for their entity. Today's round of the session saw an account by only one of the witnesses, Supervisor Farrand, who spoke about actions and processes that have, in the last 12 months, helped stabilise the situation in the area. Farrand put a special emphasis on creation of conditions for minority returns, establishment of a multi-ethnic police force and confidence-building measures. In a lengthy confrontation of arguments between Farrand on one side and the respective lawyers from the RS and the Federation, Farrand remained fully wedded to a neutral position. Lawyers from the Federation will continue questioning Farrand tomorrow, after which testimonies will be given by other international officials from OSCE, UNHCR and SFOR. After over 30 witnesses have appeared before the Tribunal during the eight-day session, the final decision will, most likely, be made in the second half of March.
2:25

The RS PM, Milorad Dodik, at a press conference held in BL today, described his visit to the US as the most successful of all his visits. Talking about meetings he had in the last seven days, Dodik especially emphasised those that had taken place in Washington, at the US Ministry of Finance, after which DM 20 million had been unfrozen and were currently available to be distributed to RS budget beneficiaries. According to Dodik, another DM 32 million will be allocated to the RS shortly by the World Bank to support the ongoing privatisation process. On his meeting with the U.S. President, Bill Clinton, Dodik said that Clinton had expressed support for activities by the RS Government. Dodik also commented on the most recent session of the RS Senate along with some statements by President Poplasen and hoped that the new RS PM Designate was going to return the mandate.
2:50

A meeting between the HR, Carlos Westendorp, and representatives of the "Sloga" Coalition, Radisic, Plavsic and Dodik, is currently ongoing in Banja Luka.
0:17

A meeting of the OHR Economic Task Force (ETF) took place in BL today. The meeting was attended by Carlos Westendorp, his Deputy for Economic Affairs, Didier Fau, and representatives of relevant RS ministries. After the meeting, the RS Minister of Finance, Novak Kondic, stated that the participants had discussed economic measures that had, in the last year, proven to be worthwhile. Kondic went on to say that, with a view to protecting citizens' interests, a decision had recently been made on the enforcement of public revenues, which said that payments to be made as municipal or republic budget income, including public funds income, would in the future be in KMs. Communal fees would, however, be able to be paid in Yugo dinars. Under the Law on the BH Central Bank, our books are to be kept in KMs which is why the Government has been forced to introduce the market and the real exchange rate to the Yugo

dinar, which is now one KM to 8,5 dinars. Saying that projects worth about DM 550 million had been implemented in the RS last year, thanks to the RS Government, the HR, Carlos Westendorp, added that: “We are ready to continue with this support to the Government which we have been explaining at the preparatory meeting to the donors’ conference that is to take place in the month of May”.
2:40

Kosovo-related news
7:33

The identification of dead bodies of Serb civilians and troops exhumed at the localities of Vlakovo, Lav, Dobrinja, Kosevo Stadium and Miljevici at the end of last year started at a former JNA barracks in Serb Sarajevo. The identification process will continue until Thursday, 11 February, and expectations are that a large number of dead bodies will be identified.
1:55

The Greek Foreign Minister, Theodoros Pangalos, met with his BiH counterpart, Jadranko Prlic, and members of the BiH Presidency in Sarajevo today. At a joint press conference held after the meeting, Pangalos stated that it had been agreed to establish regular consultations at the level of Heads of Political Departments of the two countries’ Foreign Ministries and to form a joint Committee for Economic Co-operation.
0:32

BH Federation-related news
1:26

Representatives of the Serb Coalition for the RS held a regular press conference in BL today. On the Brcko issue, Predrag Lazarevic, President of the Coalition Co-ordinating Board, stated that, instead of accepting the factual state, the other side in the arbitration process had been behaving in

an aggressive way and thus only deepening the rift between the Bosnian nations and, also, jeopardising BiH. As for the establishment of customs relations between the RS and the FRY, Predrag Radic, a RS MP from the Coalition, described such a move as being detrimental to both sides.
1:15

The Mayor of Banja Luka, Djordje Umicevic, met with representatives of the Congress of local and regional authorities of Europe in BL today. The meeting discussed the development of democracy in BiH, with a special emphasis on the RS and its capital. Mayor Umicevic informed the participants about relations between local and national authorities in the RS and, also, about its local-self-management and territorial organisation. A delegation of the Council of Europe has been tasked to produce a report on the development of local and regional authorities in BiH which will be of key importance in terms of possible BiH membership of this European body.
1:30

A seminar for members of commissions that will be directly engaged in public auctions took place in BL today, as part of preparations for the privatisation process in the RS. At the seminar, which was also attended by US AID privatisation experts, members of commissions were informed about legislation, modalities and procedures pertaining to the sale of state capital in RS companies through public auctions. According to the Law on privatisation of state capital in companies of RS, all companies with state capital worth less than 300,000 KM will be privatised through sales for cash. The process of identification of such companies is currently under way and is expected to end some time next month, whereas the sale of state capital in those companies will, most likely, begin as early as in April.
1:17