OHR SRT News Summary, 9 February 1999

Headlines

The Brcko Arbitration Tribunal is continuing to sit in Vienna. The third day saw a testimony by SFOR representatives serving in the town of Brcko who mainly spoke about their activities and work there. However, part of their accounts was held behind closed doors, in the presence of the President of the Court and one lawyer each from the RS and the BiH Federation. In addition, the international Supervisor, Robert Farrand, had a four hour open discussion with the BiH Federation lawyers in which their respective arguments were presented. According to unofficial sources, Supervisor Farrand remained faithful to his completely neutral position on the matter. Tomorrow's round of the session is expected to see testimonies by citizens of Brcko.
1:49
After a meeting between the HR, Carlos Westendorp, and the Speaker of the RS NA, Petar Djokic, in Banja Luka yesterday, a statement has been released form Djokic's Cabinet saying that all of the activities related to the election of the new RS Government were going to be co-ordinated with the position of the RS SP and the "Sloga" Coalition.
0:16

The High Representative for BiH, Carlos Westendorp, today held a press conference in Banja Luka where he spoke about his meeting yesterday with representatives of the "Sloga" Coalition. At the conference, Westendorp said that the "Sloga" Coalition continued to support the current PM, Milorad Dodik and that he was their only candidate for the position. "The international community is prepared to continue supporting the current RS Government, which has undertaken a number of positive measures". On the nomination of Petar Djokic by President Poplasen, Westendorp said that Djokic had informed

him that President Poplasen had never consulted him before the nomination and that Djokic was not going to accept it. “What we are worried about is President Poplasen’s behaviour who has not been behaving as the President of the RS, but rather as a member of the Serb Radical Party. He is not behaving like an institution but rather like a Belgrade agent”. Westendorp went on to refute the possibility of the RS NA being dissolved, because, as he said, there is no “constitutional crisis” for the time being. Westendorp ended by expressing the hope that President Poplasen was going to nominate a candidate who would be able to obtain a majority within the Parliament, and that should Poplasen express readiness to function as the institution of the RS President, that he was going to contact him, too.
2:14

The issue of Brcko and that of the new RS PM were among the main topics of today’s press conferences held by the SNS and the SNSD. The President of the SNS, Stanko Stanic, stated that his Party requested the IC to make the final decision and stop the uncertainty of the local population there. “I believe that the IC will not accept to have one of the main principles of the DA cancelled here”. Brcko has in the past been an example of good implementation of the DA Agreement which is why we expect to see a favourable solution of the ongoing arbitration. On the issue of Djokic’s nomination as the PM designate, Stanic said that Poplasen had never been given an approval by Djokic for this nomination and that he had never consulted “Sloga” prior to it, which indicated, as Stanic added, that Poplasen’s decision was not in the interest of the RS.
01:06

The SNSD also held a press conference in Banja Luka today. A member of the SNSD Executive Board, Slavko Mitrovic, stated that he expected that the Brcko arbitration commission that was currently in session in Vienna was going to make the final

decision “on the disputed portion of the IEBL in the area of Brcko as the town itself has never been disputable”. Mitorvic went on to say that it was obvious now that President Poplasen was supporting the current PM and his Government as he kept nominating candidates who either could not or did not want to form a new Government.
0:58

President of the RS, Nikola Poplasen, met with the Czech Ambassador in BiH, Jiri Kudela, in BL today. According to a statement released form Poplasen’s Cabinet after the meeting, President Poplasen informed the Ambassador about the current situation as regards the formation of the new RS Government. The meeting also discussed the Brcko arbitration issue. The Czech Ambassador conveyed to President Poplasen the readiness of his country to restore and develop economic co-operation with both entities and stressed the need to resolve the issue of outstanding debts by former state-owned companies which were now privately owned.
0:30

The BiH tripartite Presidency held a session in the federal part of Sarajevo today. The session agreed that the majority of conclusions that had been made from the 40th through to the 47th session of this joint body had been implemented and had requested the BiH CoM to provide the requested information. After the session, a legal advisor to Chairman Radisic, Zeljko Mirjanic, stated that the BiH Presidency had accepted an invitation by the Mayor of Drvar to visit the town and added that a programme would shortly be adopted on the Presidency members’ visits to some other BiH towns.
01:02

A regular international press conference took place in BL today. The SFOR Spokesperson informed the press that the “Harvest” operation (armament amnesty operation) was going to resume on 1st March at the request of both BiH entities. Alun Roberts, the IPTF Spokesperson, stated that IPTF now expected

to see a multi-ethnic police force formed in Canton 10 after the Cantonal Government had been constituted on 5 February. Roberts went on to explain that the RS police had no right to charge insurance on vehicles entering the country at the Gradiska border crossing, as it was normal practice in Europe that once a green card had been bought for a vehicle it should be recognised by all European countries and no special fee should be required on such vehicles.
2:15

Kosovo-related news
4:23

The Greek Foreign Minister, Theodoros Pangalos, did not visit Banja Luka yesterday as earlier planned. According to a statement by the Greek Foreign Ministry, a letter was addressed by the U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, before Pangalos' planned visit instructing her Greek counterpart that he would not visit Banja Luka.
0:35

Judges of RS local and district courts took their solemn oaths before the Speaker of the RS Parliament, Petra Djokic, in Banja Luka today.
1:42

The RS Ministry for Refugees and DPs and the Federation Ministry for Social affairs of refugees and DPs signed a joint statement today to ensure the implementation of both Instructions on the organisation of returns between the two entities. The two Instructions especially relate to the use of forms needed by refugees and DPs for the registration of their will to return voluntarily to either of the two entities.
2:15

Federation related-news
2:42.