

OHR's Statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference in Mostar

OHR South continues in Mostar

"In accordance with last week's statement by the High Representative at the closure of the Mostar Implementation Unit, the Head of OHR Regional Office South, Anatoly Viktorov, and his staff will continue to cooperate with the City executive and legislative branches. We fully believe that the City Administration and City Council now have all tools at their disposal to continue the unification process and to provide effective city services to the citizens. OHR South offers them its full support.

Process of gradual handing over authority to the elected officials of BiH has irreversibly started on 25 November with beginning of SAA negotiations process. BiH and Mostar politicians for their part must show that they are prepared to take ownership of Euro-Atlantic integration and overall reform processes and that they hold themselves fully accountable to citizens.

Council of Ministers Must Act tomorrow to Meet Police Reform Deadline

The Council of Ministers must adopt a Decision establishing the Directorate for the implementation of the EC approved plan for police reform no later than tomorrow. Failure to do so will mean that BiH will risk missing its first target on the road to Europe, and would send a very negative message to the EU given that police reform is a key SAA requirement.

"The 31st of December deadline is extremely tight. The Council of Minister's Decision is only the very first step towards setting up the Directorate. Once the Decision is made, entity and cantonal governments will have to recommend members of the Directorate to the CoM, after which the CoM will have to appoint the members," said the High Representative

"This has to be done in order to meet the end of year target that BiH has set and which Europe has endorsed. Any failure would send an extremely negative signal on BiH's commitment to deliver on their promises. How can the EU have confidence in BiH if BiH that misses its own deadlines," he added.

International Community Not Bowing Out of BiH

The International Community is not bowing out of BiH, the Principal Deputy High Representative, Larry Butler, will tell an audience in Washington later today. "BiH *still* needs an international engagement, but a transformed one. From now on, this engagement must be at the level of conventional political, economic and social partnership – of the type that the European Union and the United States have successfully developed with other European transition countries. This, in itself testifies to the remarkable success of the process that was launched at Dayton a decade ago."

Ambassador Butler will be speaking at a seminar organized by the Woodrow Wilson Centre in Washington. Among the points he will stress are that "BiH is not a normal transition or accession-aspirant country. It will require active, and tight, international coordination as leadership starts to shift from the OHR, and the countries that make up the PIC, to the institutions of Europe. What once were *international* rivalries, overcome with great effort, and with greater effect, cannot be replaced by *institutional* rivalries or turf battles."

I've brought along copies of the PDHR's speech in full.

Transport Infrastructure Set to Receive Major Boost

As you know, increasing the rate of economic growth in BiH – 5.6 percent this year – depends on upgrading the transport system. You won't sell even the most competitive products if you can't get them to market quickly and cheaply. A major element in rehabilitating the BiH transport system will be to give full responsibility for railway infrastructure management to the BiH Railways Public Corporation. This function, which exists in every other modern economy, coordinates all rail services in the country and ensures that they work with optimal efficiency – it's impossible to run a rail network with incompatible railway gauges, for example, or incompatible timetables. Following the enactment of the BiH Railway Law, in July this year, OHR has been working with the Entity transport ministries to establish a BiH RIMO, and hopes that this will be done by April next year.

In this context, OHR fully endorses the BiH Regional Railway Project, an inter-Entity initiative supported by the EBRD and the EIB, with technical assistance from the EU CARDS project.

On Friday at the BiH Council of Ministers, the BiH authorities and their international partners will sign a memorandum on this project, which will make available EURO 194 million in EBRD finance and an additional EURO 70 million in loans. The implementing agency for the project will be the BiH Railways Public Corporation.

High Representative to Visit Tuzla, Call for Better Use of Education Resources

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is visiting Tuzla today.

During his visit the High Representative will present computers from its offices in Tuzla and Doboje. The OHR Regional Office's in Tuzla and Doboje are due to close at the end of the year.

With the start of the Stabilisation and Association process the engagement of the International Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina is changing. The High Representative has made it clear that "closing OHR offices must be seen as a process of gradual handing over authority to the elected officials of BiH, who, for their part, must show that they are prepared to take ownership of Euro-Atlantic integration and that they hold themselves fully accountable to citizens."

These computers are the first installment of a larger donation that OHR will make to this and to other schools throughout BiH. "This is an optimal utilization of resources, but it is a drop in the ocean in terms of the resources that BiH schoolchildren need and don't currently have,"

The High Representative will pay a farewell call on OHR staff from Tuzla and Doboje, at the OHR Tuzla office, and express his appreciation for the dedication and they have shown over the years. As part of the OHR's downsizing – which has seen a fifty-percent staff cut since the beginning of last year – and ahead of the projected closure of the organization as its remaining responsibilities are taken over by the Office of the EU Special Representative, the Tuzla and Doboje offices will be closed at the end of this year. This reflects the PIC recommendation, in June this year, that the OHR's activities be scaled back at a pace determined by BiH's progress from peace stabilization to European integration.