Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	• SCD BiH / SDP Platform for Mostar
OSCE	Richard Medic	• HNC social welfare issue
ICTY Outreach	Refik Hodzic	• Biljana Plavsic hearing
SFOR	Maj. Christoph Fix	• Weapons found in Trebinje

Avis Benes – OHR

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to yet another press conference of International Organisations seated in Mostar. Today, on behalf of the OHR I have one very brief point for you. It is about the fact that the Deputy High Representative and the Head of our Mostar Office, Jean-Pierre Bercot, has received The Platform "for work towards development of Mostar into one complex, multiethnic, equal and democratic community" made by Coalition Club of SCD BiH and SDP in the Mostar City Council. I guess you are familiar with the presented Platform.

Ambassador Bercot expects that these words will be followed by actions. Since this "Platform" reflects the standpoint that Interim Statute offers sufficient legal framework for unification of the City, Ambassador Bercot also expects that these Councilors will in the next month present to all inhabitants of Mostar effective results regarding all open issues in the City without demands for the IC to do that for

them, as it is presently the case. Moreover, he is looking forward to receive from these Councilors their written legal proposals regarding suggested 'upgraded and more functional solutions of the Interim Statute', which is mentioned in their Platform.

Richard Medic – OSCE

Good morning. There is just one point from the OSCE today. It is difficult for OSCE or other observers to conclude that the C-7 Government places a priority at all on the welfare of some of its residents. If they did, the long-pending legislation on Social Welfare, Civil Victims of War and the Protection of Families with Children would now be law. OSCE strongly supports the recommendations of the FBiH Ombudsman contained in its October 2002 report. The sobering details therein describe the severe C-7 situation resulting from inadequate regulation and provision of social welfare assistance. Both domestic BiH and international law have established a minimum level of social welfare that does not now exist in Canton 7. We recognize the near-bankrupt condition of the Canton's finances. However, establishing a legal framework and taking steps to conserve scarce resources and budgeting accordingly, are separate issues. OSCE joins the FBiH Ombudsman, and the men, women and children who continue to find themselves ignored by Canton 7's welfare legislation, in urging cantonal officials to pass this law immediately. That is all from the OSCE for today, thanks for your attention.

Refik Hodzic – ICTY Outreach

Good morning. Today, I have an announcement for you. The event I am going to announce is due next week. Namely, next Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, there will be a hearing held at the ICTY / the Hague on the sentence in the case against Biljana Plavsic. As I am sure you already know, the hearing takes place after Biljana Plavsic pleaded guilty to account no. 3 of the indictment against persecution of non-

Serb population, as well as genocide. While pleading guilty, she accepted the responsibility for her deeds, which were described in account no. 3, which include the role she played in wide-spread systematic attack on civilian population. She admitted to have committed deeds against victims that resulted in violations of the basic human rights and that she intended to commit such deeds. She also admitted her deeds had political, racial and religious background and that those deeds were committed with a deliberate intention of discrimination. Bearing this in mind, it is important to note that account 3 of the indictment against Biljana Plavsic refers to crimes committed against Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats and other non-Serb population in some 37 municipalities throughout BiH. Crimes listed under this account include murders during or following attacks onto towns or villages in those municipalities, cruel and inhumane treatment including torturing, physical or psychological harassment, sexual harassment and making people live under inhumane living conditions; forcible transfers of people or deportation; illegal detention into centres in which living conditions were inhumane, as well as killings and cruel and inhumane treatment in those institutions; forcible labour; expropriation of property and plundering; deliberate and wide-spread destruction of property. In line with the agreement on pleading guilty, the Prosecutor's Office has withdrawn other accounts of indictments and it has been decided that there would be a public hearing on the sentence, during which both the defense and the prosecution will be in a position to present their respective arguments that are to help the Trial Chamber to pass the appropriate sentence. The hearing will take place between 09:30 – 16:00 hours on Monday and Tuesday, December 16 and 17. The sides will then bring in their witnesses to corroborate their arguments. The closing arguments of the sides will take place on Wednesday, December 18. Following this discussion, the Trial Chamber will withdraw and will decide on the sentence on Biljana Plavsic in due course. That would be all from me.

Major Fix – SFOR

Good morning. I will just say a few words concerning thepress release issued yesterday morning. The press release was dealing with the discovery of weapons and ammunition dump in the region of Duzi. After the press release was issued, main media reported that this was a weapon cache. I must insist on the fact that it was not a cache, but a mere dump in the nature that was located close to a road. The intent of the perpetrators was that they are waiting that SFOR or local authorities discover the spot.

Avis Benes – OHR

Before we move onto your question, let me remind you that our next press conference will be held here, in Ero Hotel. Bearing in mind that the press conferences that are to follow the next one fall on December 25 and January 1, they will not be held due to the holidays, but our press offices will, naturally, be available for your questions.

Questions:

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTVMO): I have 2 questions.If I understood your statement well, after it received the Platform of the mentioned councillors, the OHR now expects actionand deeds. Who do you expect if from – just from these councillors or from the entire Mostar City Council? Could you, please, be more specific as to what kind of action is expected?

My second question refers to the priorities that have recently been specified by the High Representative for BiH. The Mostar's Old Bridge reconstruction is among those top priorities. Could you, please, give an explanation on behalf of the OHR why this has been set as a priority?

A: Avis Benes: As for the action and deeds, action is required, as a mater of principle, from all the councillors. All of them are to demonstrate full readiness for solving the

crucial issue – and that is the issue of unification of Mostar. Speaking about the Platform itself, the councillors who initiated it are expected to present the results of all the open issues. You know that the practice in this town to resolve open issues is to always transfer the things onto the OHR. The Platform is a kind of an initiative so we expect those councillors to act upon the initiative accordingly.

As for the Old Bridge reconstruction, the High Representative has on a number of occasions, including his last visit to Mostar, repeated this. TheOld Bridge reconstruction is a symbolic sign of a new phase in BiH, when all the bridges between the river banks and the ones between the people will be strengthened.

Q: Zvonimir Jukic (ONASA, FTV): My question also relates to the mentioned Platform. It has not been initiated or passed by a legal body, i.e. the City Council.

A: Avis Benes: That is right.

Q: Zvonimir Jukic (ONASA, FTV): As far as I am aware, this is the third initiative of a similar kind over the last couple of days. There was the Action Plan for which it has never been established whether it has been passed or not. Then we had the Tomic-Jahic Plan, and now we have this Platform. Are these documents deepening the national division in Mostar?

A: Avis Benes: This sounds more like a comment than a question. I think our statement is quite clear – the words are expected to be followed by deeds.

Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA): My question goes to the ICTY.We have been witnessing the formation of the new authorities in BiH by the national parties and with great efforts. What does the ICTY expect from the new authorities or, the other way round, what will the Tribunal's attitude towards the new authorities in the country? Thank you.

A: Refik Hodzic: The reply to this question is quite a simple one. The relations between the Tribunal and the states, either the ones from this region or other UN member-countries, are regulated by the Tribunal's Statute and the Rule on Evidence Procedures which are documents passed by the UN highest body – the Security Council. In this sense, those relations are very clearly regulated and, irrespective of which political parties make the authorites, the commitments in relation to the co-operation with the ICTY are very clear. It does not matter who is in power – the co-operation with the Tribunal is an international commitment that has to be fulfilled so we expect that the new authorities will continue the co-operation to the degree and in the aspect in which it has been a positive one. When it comes to segments in which the co-operation has been poor, we expect it to improve.

A: Avis Benes: If there are no further questions, I thank you for your attention. See you next year.