

Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

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Avis Benes – OHR

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to yet another press conference of International Organisations seated in Mostar. On behalf of the OHR, we have to reminders and two brief statements for you today.

The first issue refers to something you already know, but let me remind once again that the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is in New York today, where he will address the UN Security Council together with SRSG Jacques Paul Klein. This will be an important occasion as it will be the last time that the Security Council discusses BiH while still having an extensive UN mission in the country. Tomorrow, the High Representative will travel on to Washington, where he will meet with senior US Administration officials. You will be informed on the results of the trip subsequently.

My second point is the reminder of the letter the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, and UNMIBH Deputy SRSG, Souren Seraydarian, sent to political party leaders in BiH, condemning in the strongest possible terms any form of political obstruction of the work of law enforcement agencies. It has come to the International Community's attention that enormous pressure is being placed on senior police officers by a number of political players, including Ministers of Interior and political parties, in an attempt to exert political influence on the police. The IC stance is that political interference in operational police matters is in clear contradiction with the principles of democratic policing and is entirely unacceptable. The letter reads that the International Community will not tolerate any attempt by political or criminal elements to obstruct the work of the police forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and use them for the realization of their own objectives. We will unrelentingly continue with democratic police reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the eradication of political interference in police matters and that the politicians who continue with political obstruction of the police will have to bear the consequences of their irresponsible acts.

Now, on to the local, i.e. cantonal level. On 21 October, DHR-South, Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot sent a letter to Prime Minister Omer Macic and Deputy Prime Minister Miroslav Coric reminding them of the failure to implement their own decision of the Cantonal Government to produce 'Rule book on internal organization'. This decision was passed on 12 July and it is very much in line with the principle of transparency that OHR strongly advocates, since it requests clear outlining of internal organization of every ministry. However, since the deadline was one month and clearly not respected – the deadline expired on August 12 – the OHR expects that these documents must be produced within a very short period of time.

OHR-South considers implementation of this decision one of the

priorities before the establishment of new authorities in the Canton following the results of the last elections. Non-implementation of this decision will mean a failure of the Cantonal Government as well as Prime Minister and his deputy personally to ensure good governance and transparent functioning in this Canton.

My last point is basically a clarification that refers to an item from the set of Laws the HR passed last Monday. As the issue concerns Mostar, we thought it would be of your interest. You will have seen that the HR made a decision on accommodating 5 FBiH Ministries in Mostar and that our Press Release mentioned 4 Ministries. The DPA stipulates that 4 Ministries are supposed to have their seats in Mostar: the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Traffic and Communications, the Ministry of Energy and Industry and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. However, according to the new Law there will be 16 ministries altogether, i.e. the latter one will be divided in 2: the Ministry of Education and Science as one Ministry, and a separate Ministry of Culture of Sports. Thus, according to Article 30 of the new Law, there will be 5 ministries seated in Mostar. The IC continues focusing its efforts in normalizing and fostering the importance of Mostar and the Herzegovina within BiH. The new Federation Government is expected to implement these provisions which were foreseen in the Dayton Peace Agreement so the Federation building in Mostar could finally lodge the above mentioned ministries. Let me just add that Article 30, apart from stipulating that the seats of FBiH authorities – with the exception of the mentioned Ministries – will be in Sarajevo, also stipulates that, should the FBiH Government reach a consent on the issue, the Government can determine that some other FBiH bodies of authorities are seated elsewhere.

Richard Medic – OSCE

Good morning, everyone. Today I have only one point for you

today.

As you all know, OSCE Mission has been given the primary responsibility to lead and coordinate the BiH and International Community education reform process.

As a part of the ongoing reform process OSCE, in partnership with OHR and other international and local authorities, is launching a public information campaign on education reform. The Campaign's purpose is to explain to the public the reforms being discussed aimed at modernizing BiH schools to internationally accepted standards.

The campaign will be launched next Monday at schools across the whole of BiH – in Sarajevo, Mostar, Ljubuski, Bihac, Banja Luka and Tuzla. The launch will include a press conference, photo exhibition, roundtable discussion on specific reforms and classroom visits by members of the BiH Education Reform Steering Group.

All media are cordially invited to the launch activities to be held at the 4th Elementary School in Mostar and the Marko Marulic Primary School in Ljubuski, on Monday, 28th October. The launch will begin at 11 am with the Press Conference.

Major Christophe de Lambert – SFOR

On Tuesday 22nd October, at 08:30, SFOR/ MNDSE troops in collaboration with IPTF and Local Police discovered large amount of illegal weapons and ammunitions in a farm.

This operation was performed within the framework of the HARVEST 2002 campaign, a co-operative initiative of the Armed Forces BiH, SFOR, local authorities and the IPTF in order to remove illegally held weapons, ammunitions and warlike-materials from circulation.

All civilians involved in this affair have been checked and

identified by the Local Police. Charges have been filed against two persons for illegal possession of weapon and ammunition. The collected materials have been removed by IPTF and Local Police to the nearest compound. They will be moved to a storage depot and destroyed later.

Project HARVEST 2002 is already a successful operation, but new discovery highlights the fact that some people deliberately keep on hiding illegal weaponry and this, despite the large advertisement campaign performed in the same area. Every weapon and round of ammunition collected and destroyed makes BiH a safer place to live. SFOR and its project partners will continue to implement this project with the same professionalism and enthusiasm.

Also I have one personal statement to make.

Today is my last press conference here with you after my four-month stay in Mostar. As a Chief of PIO and MNDSE Spokesperson, I had opportunity to make contacts with domicile population, journalists, other IO Spokespersons. So I would like to use this opportunity to thank you all for a great co-operation and trust we achieved during my stay here. THANK YOU VERY MUCH, this was a very nice experience for me to meet and work with you.

The last thing I would like to do is to introduce my successor, Major Christophe Fix. Major Fix. He will be the next PIO Chief for 4 months before the hand-over to an Italian.

I wish all the best to you, your families and, of course, for your country. Thank you.

Questions:

Q: Zoran Kresic (HRTV Mostar, Radio Herzeg-Bosne, Vecernji list): Major Lambert, we thank you for the 6 months spent with us. Though you are about to leave, we will have to ask

additional questions relating to your statement. Can you tell us exactly where and how much and what kind of ammunition and weaponry was discovered.

A: Major De Lambert: Of course I can, but it is not the point. The ammunition was found in the eastern part of the country, near Rogatica. Once again, that is not the point. The amount is around 12 assault riffles and this kind of weapons but only on one far. As for the ammunition, a large quantity was discovered.

Q: Denis Vila (RTV Mostar): Avis, you have spoken about the accommodation of Ministries in Mostar, in the Federation building. But, we are still not aware of the building's status – whether they have the proper documents, whether its construction is disputable or not...

A: Avis Benes: In any case, as it is known, the OHR supports suspension of illegal construction and legalisation, on a legal basis, of the facilities that have been constructed if the decision of the City Council and the City Administration stipulates so. We will not get involved into individual cases as we are of the opinion that the Independent Legal Commission, founded on 25 March this year, is the body that is to issue its legal recommendations on the basis of which the City Administration and the City Council are to act upon. They are the ones who are to resolve this issue. In general, it is not up to us to decide in which buildings the Ministries are to be accommodated. Finally, their actual seats within a city are not something that is stipulated by the Law. What matters is that they are seated in Mostar.