# Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

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## Avis Benes – OHR

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the press conference of the International Organisations seated in Mostar.

Today, on behalf of the OHR I'll have three items.

The first one pertains to the OHR's position on the past elections and what is coming up after the elections. Deputy High Representative and Head of OHR (S) Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot congratulates all those involved in the organization of 5 October elections for successful performance and elections which took place without major incidents. The fact that they were for the first time organized by the domestic authorities proves maturity of BiH bodies to conduct such an important task. Now the significant task ahead of authorities is to, as soon as possible, implement election results, when they are to be officially announced and whichever they turn out to be. The

formation of effective government which will rapidly tackle concerns of people and lead the country in the reform is a first priority. These governments will be judged by their deeds, not their words.  And deeds are urgently needed. This is more than applicable for the situation in this Canton. Politicians in HN Canton should have two important things in mind:

Firstly, that the present government has a full responsibility for dealing with the situation until a new government is established. The present situation in the Canton is a product of its work and therefore is still its business. People cannot afford to have vacuum in operations of government, especially in such a critical situation. The Cantonal Governments will be fully judged for their performance until the last day of their work.

Secondly, following the Decision of the High Representative which amends the Federation Constitution into Line with Constitutional Court's Decision on Constituency of Peoples, you are aware that this Canton will not be a canton with special regime any more. The future government and its functioning will be as in any other Canton of the Federation BiH, with certain mechanisms for protection. The Decision was issued prior to the implementation of the 05 October election results to get from day 1 functional authorities.  Also, this decision will help reducing governmental functioning costs by avoiding duplication and parallelism, therefore increasing efficiency. That's what we hope. OHR expects all those responsible for the formation of the future government to deal seriously and quickly with this task.

Second issue was already announced to you yesterday. Namely, as I speak, The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is addressing representatives of the regional development agencies and international investors. The international investors invited include some of the world's most successful multinational companies. In his speech, the High

Representative will set out the actions by which the international community will judge the new governments. He will set out six tests which any government will need to implement over the next six months if BiH is to stay on track for delivering the people's priorities: justice and jobs. You can already have his speech, which currently exists only in English, even before he finishes. It is available here and it will give you an idea as to what is he talking about at this very moment.

Thirdly, I am coming back to the city level issue. As it is known, the City Administration of Mostar on 25 March 2002 appointed the Independent Legal Commission (ILC) in order to tackle the issue of illegal construction in the Central Zone. OHR fully supported and supports this newly formed body, since numerous disputable cases of illegal construction in the Mostar Central Zone are indeed very concerning. In the last few months, the OHR(S) had some meetings with Mayors of City municipalities, representatives of the City Administration and the members of the ILC. The position of OHR is that it is important that the work of the ILC is also fully supported by all authorities, City and municipal ones, which should fully cooperate with the Commission. On the other hand, the work of the ILC must be fully transparent and open to the public. In that sense, and six months after its formation, the first results of the Commission should be presented to the public very soon.

**Philipp Henning – OSCE**

Good morning everybody.

The election is over and the preliminary results are known. The logistics, organization and technical execution of BiH's sixth poll were truly excellent as attested to by the monitors, observers and various representatives of the International Community. This job is over. But, an even more challenging and difficult political experience lies ahead: the

formation of governments based on constructive programs.

The High Representative made several decisions on 6 October 02 one of which relinquishes more political authority to the citizens of Canton 7 and their political representatives. I refer, of course, to the elimination of the special regime status. This step is part of a process that has included the International Community backing away from election management, and also encouraging the use of the judicial system to remove allegedly corrupt individuals.

The new government will face very significant challenges, two of the most important being the continued closure of the Bosniak curriculum schools and the bankruptcy of the Canton's finances. In recent discussions with leaders of the teachers union concerned, the Mostar Regional Center Director Tom Timberman, expressed deep concern at a situation whereby one segment of Mostar's children are denied schooling while another isn't. Ambassador Timberman told them that "… open access to education is a fundamental human right which OSCE vigorously pursues and which I intend to address personally."

## Questions

**Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88):** Question for OSCE – today is the 9th October. I would like to know when will OSCE address the fundamental human right – education – as it is obvious that the Cantonal officials will do nothing. Whether will the IC do something?

Avis, regardless of your appeal on transparent reporting on decisions of the Independent Legal Commission I would like to know whether you have information that this Commission has issued any permit for construction or halted construction works on some site in the Central Zone over the last six month? The impression I have is that nothing has been done.

**A: Henning Phillip:** The OSCE will continue to closely monitor what is going on in the field of education in the Canton and you can be sure that the OSCE Regional Centre Director will address the issue further in discussions with the responsible authorities and try to help them to find a solution. And let me add and emphasise it is clearly not the business of OSCE to find solutions in this issue, this is up to the local authorities right now. I hope the current Government still will find a solution in not so far away future.

**A: Avis Benes:** As far as your question is concerned, the OHR has not received that sort of a decision you mentioned by this Commission. However this does not mean that they do not exist. However, question about decisions should be posed directly to the Commission.

**Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88):** Let me clarify – over the last six months of work of this Commission, they have not submitted any kind of report which would testify that they did something in the Central Zone?

**A: Avis Benes:** As I understood, you asked about a concrete decision, isn't it right? We have not received such a document. There were certain activities undertaken by this Commission and therefore it is the best that they talk about it.

**Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA):** Question for Mr. Henning. Analysts are already anticipating a political crisis in BIH in the forthcoming winter period, before the formation of new bodies of authority. There are different possibilities of various combinations for coalitions but none is guaranteeing political stability. Does it mean that one can already speculate about a possibility of repeated elections?

**A: Henning Phillip:** I would like to abstain from any speculations. We do hope that the election results will be

implemented very soon and that strong governments will be formed and able of dealing with difficult issues that this country is facing.

**Q: Ivan Bakovic (HTV Mostar):** Question for Ms. Benes – whether is the information that appeared this morning in Dnevni List that one of the Deputies to the High Representative halted announcement of the Supreme Court's decision on transference of the Jelavic's trial from Sarajevo to Mostar Cantonal Court accurate?

Question for SFOR – After the sensational discovery of secret caches there were information that some 2000 more mortar shells were allegedly hidden somewhere. At that time SFOR announced that the search was still ongoing. Has the search stopped? Is this investigation still ongoing?

**A: Avis Benes:** As for your question, such letters or documents are not known to me but I would have to check with our office in Sarajevo.

**Q: Ivan Bakovic (HTV Mostar):** Could you please let me know about the outcome.

**A: Avis Benes:** Definitely, as soon as I find out.

**A: Major De Lambert:** Concerning these caches, you are probably speaking about Tobacco Factory and the other one in April and May. I think the investigation of the IPTF and local police is still ongoing. We still have no information.

**Q: Alija Bijavica (Radio Stari Most):** Where is SFOR disposing motor vehicles' waste, such as motor oil?

**A: Maj. De Lambert:** You are referring to the article in Vecernji List published one month ago I think. We have a contract with a contractor in Mostar area. He is supposed to collect spoiled oil and after it is his business to clean it and dispose it. I think we are one of the most important

customer of this enterprise and we are looking in a very accurate manner what he is doing with this spoiled oil.

**Q: Alija Bijavica (Radio Stari Most):** Where is the location?

**A: Maj. De Lambert:** Close to Mostar. I do not know exactly where.

**A number of journalists:** Neretva is the location.

**Q: Alija Bijavica (Radio Stari Most):** I am not sure it isNeretva. The reason for which I asked this question is the fact that Mostar has very specific and problematic climate and a lot of sunny days.