Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	• MA on PDHR's visit to C7 • DHR Bercot welcomes verification of the Statute for the joint C7 Employment Bureau
OSCE	Richard Medic	• OSCE welcomes HNC Government support to education reform • Wanted: Young Herzegovinians with Ideas
SFOR	Capt. Magistretti	• MA on joint exercise in area of Stolac • MA on re-opening of Nevesinje Hospital • Invitation to media to informal breakfast with MNB SE Commander

Avis Benes – OHR:

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the press conference of international organizations seated in Mostar, which has been scheduled an hour earlier today. As you probably know, there will be another media opportunity today on behalf of the OHR at 14.30 hrs, when Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays will address the media in scope of his visit to Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. I believe that you received a media advisory about his visit and that you know that he is going to attend a roundtable at 1130 hrs, which media are invited to. You probably read in the media advisory who will be the other participants of this roundtable. See you all at 1430 hrs.

For today's press conference I have one very short point for you regarding yesterday's session of the Government. There will be no need for translation.

Deputy High Representative, Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot, welcomes yesterday's verification of the Statute for the joint HNC Employment Service by the Cantonal Government, which has been talked about for months. This was a necessary precondition in order for this Employment Service to start working jointly and properly, providing the same service to all citizens of the Canton. Ambassador Bercot hopes that the other issues on the list of priorities of the Cantonal Government will also be tackled in the very near future.

That was all on behalf of the OHR. Now, I give the floor to Richard and OSCE.

Richard Medic – OSCE

Thank you Avis. I have two points today. Just to let you know that the first statement will be sent to you electronically and by fax later this morning. The second statement is available here.

OSCE welcomes the public support given yesterday by the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Prime Minister, Mr. Miroslav Coric, for the swift implementation of the eight priorities the international community considers crucial for the future of this Canton.

One of those priorities is to work on the administrative unification of the "Fra Dominik Mandic" and "Mostar First" Gymnasia, together with integration of classes for the five science subjects, as well as to work on administrative unification of all 'two schools under one roof' in this Canton.

While OSCE welcomes the HNC Government's commitment to implementation of Pledge One of the 2002 Education Reform Strategy, it also urges the new HNC Minister for Education to quickly issue instructions on the administrative unification of two schools under one roof, and to work with other local authorities towards integration of the "Fra Dominik Mandic"

and “Mostar First” Gymnasia.

My second point – the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina is continuing its search for more young people throughout BiH to apply for the “Successor Generation Initiative” (SGI). First launched in 2002, SGI aims to bolster exceptional young people who have already demonstrated outstanding leadership skills. As in the first phase, SGI will further enhance participants’ skills and support them with a project aimed at improving their communities, the economy or the political system. This year, OSCE staff will work with 30 participants to develop and implement their own ideas for change. “ The future of this country lies in the hands of its youth, and we are looking for people with a vision of the sort of nation they wish to live in. I therefore appeal to young people from across Herzegovina to apply for the SGI and to take advantage of the opportunities this program offers,” said Ambassador Thomas Young, Director of OSCE RC Mostar. Marin Vukoja, an SGI graduate who has since been appointed Secretary of the West Herzegovina Canton Government, has said that SGI is “probably the only program that has drawn together representatives of different sectors – NGO members, people from the media, businessmen in this way”. Of those SGI graduates from the Herzegovina region, two have started their own companies and another is a member of the Herzegovina-Neretva Cantonal Assembly. Admission is open to young people from 20 to 30 years old with different experiences – from civil society movements, politics, university, business, and environmental initiatives. Successful applicants will be able to demonstrate that they have concrete ideas about how they can bring about positive change in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Detailed information about the program and how to apply is available at OSCE RC Mostar, our Field Offices in Trebinje, Capljina, and Siroki Brijeg, as well as on our web site, www.oscebih.org. All applications must be received no later than 8 August 2003, with the final selection being announced on 16 September. The program will commence on 24 September,

and will be followed by monthly seminars and individual follow-up with participants.

Just to add that this programme is open to journalists as well. So I urge you to apply. We have more information and application forms here.

Avis Benes – OHR:

Thank you Richard. Let's hear SFOR and Capt. Magistretti.

Capt. Magistretti – MNB SE

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning. Today I have three points for you.

This afternoon at 14.00 near the town of Stolac, Multinational Brigade Southeast will conduct a joint exercise with the Federation Armed Forces. The aim of this exercise is to train the involved units in common medical rescue and first-aid procedures. Four helicopters, six ambulances and some 50 people will be involved in this rehearsal which will include a response to a simulated car accident.

Multinational Brigade South East appreciates the cooperation of the local residents as well.

Next Friday 25th July at 11:00 am, Nevesinje local hospital will celebrate its reopening. The works, financed by France, have been followed by the French Civil-Military Cooperation team of the Multinational Brigade South East. The Commander of the French Spanish Battle Group, Colonel Terol and his deputy Lt-Col. Chapoulaud will take part to the ceremony.

The last point for today is the invitation for an informal breakfast with the Commander. Brigadier General Chiarini will be glad to host all of you on Friday 1st August at 9.30 in Mostar Europe Base, Ortijes.

Thank you.

Questions:

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): My first question is for the OSCE. I was present at yesterday's press conference hosted by Mr. Coric and I didn't get the impression that he supports the integration plan. He said that he does not believe the integration will happen by the start of this academic year. He justified his claim by the fact that there is a substantial lack of financial means required for reconstruction. As far as I'm informed, the international community promised to provide these funds. Mr. Coric also said that the parents, whose children have enrolled in the Gymnasium, did not expect their children to be taught in Bosnian or Croat language as of the beginning of the next academic year. I'm referring to the five science subjects.

A: Richard Medic: Firstly, Mr. Coric's comments yesterday supported the eight priorities which the international community considers important for the future of this Canton. I reiterate: the eighth priority was administrative unification of 'two schools under one roof', as well as the integration of the "Fra Dominika Mandica" and the "Mostar First" Gymnasia. As far as Mr. Coric's concerns regarding the timeline and framework of the integration, I have to say that Mr. Coric's support is very important to ensure the integration takes place on time, so that kids from both schools can start the school year in a building which is refurbished, or at least in the process of refurbishment. It must be ensured that the conditions under which they will be studying offer quality facilities, because the facilities at both schools are at the moment inadequate.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): Mr. Medic, I have a concrete question for you. Will this be ensured by the beginning of the next academic year? And I mean the 'integration'.

A: Richard Medic: This is up to local authorities. There is only so much the international community can do. We're here to facilitate the integration, and obviously we have to rely on good will and compromise of local authorities at all levels.

Q: Tina Jelin (Studio 88): My next question is for the OHR. EU Ambassadors in BiH stated at the press conference on Monday that if the Commission drafting the Statute proposal does not come up with a solution, there is a possibility of the High Representative imposing one. Is there a solution? Is there an OHR proposal? Does it exist?

A: Avis Benes: No, an OHR proposal does not exist. OHR is focused and expects the Commission that was formed for that purpose to come up with a solution. I wouldn't like to speculate about any other possible scenarios.