Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	• OHR (S) welcomes merging of cadastre offices in Mostar
OSCE	Richard Medic	• OSCE's Public Outreach Initiative begins • Election 2002: Free, open, active press essential component of democracy
SFOR	Maj. De Lambert	• Inauguration of Nevesinje's College

Avis Benes – OHR

On behalf of the OHR today we will have only one item – welcoming of one more step in the integration of the city of Mostar. This statement will be available in writing after the press conference.

The OHR is pleased to learn that the former Cadastre Departments in the two parts of Mostar, in accordance to the provisions of the Mostar Interim Statute as well as the Cantonal Law on Local Self-Government, finally have been merged in one office within the Mostar City Administration. The merging of these two offices has been an old request of the citizens of Mostar as well as from the OHR. The OHR congratulates the City for this significant step forward and hopes that other institutions will follow this example. In addition, it has been also agreed and envisaged that the Mostar Land Registry Office will be transferred from its

present office at the premises of the Mostar University to the Cernica Court Building, which will also serve for the Central Zone Court. All of us here know where these buildings are located and thus the Mostar Land Registry Office will be in proximity of the new Cadastre Office. OHR expects that the re-location of the Mostar Land Registry will take place as soon as possible. In sum, the whole arrangement should fully enable all citizens of Mostar six municipalities and the Central Zone to have prompt and more efficient access to needed documents in regard to land and property.

Richard Medic – OSCE

Two very short statements.

The OSCE Mission to BiH has started a series of workshops with municipal authorities to improve their public relations. The workshops, so-called Public Outreach Initiative, commenced yesterday and will continue for the month of September in 22 municipalities throughout BiH. These workshops provide specialized training to municipal officials to establish steady communication between municipal officials and the public. The training will focus on how to raise the interest of public and civic groups in work of municipal governments and how to involve citizens in work of the government; in other words to create atmosphere of co-operation and trust. The first workshop in our AoR will be held tomorrow in Capljina and will include participating municipalities: Capljina/ Trebinje/ Mostar South West/ Jablanica and Tomislavgrad.

The second point I have concerns free, open and active press being an essential component of democracy. The more mature democracies such as those of Western Europe and North America have relied increasingly on a robust, even intrusive, but professionally responsible press, to keep the processes informed and responsive. OSCE has worked with other members of the International Community to strengthen and create where

needed this essential voice of the people. The Regional Center Director said recently that "… the preconditions for the presence of an informed, sometime irritating press are certainly present here which is good news for democracy."

Maj. De Lambert – SFOR

Just short media advisory.

Jus to let you know that on September the 6th, 2002, the Elementary School of Nevesinje will be inaugurated at 11.00 AM. The conditions of teaching in this school were very bad before the reconstruction of the building. The works led by the CIMIC cell from the French Battle Group in Mostar, were composed of building in new windows and doors inside each classroom, and painting of the walls and ceilings. The works were carried out by a local company, and lasted for three months. This rehabilitation concerns the education of approximately 1,000 pupils. The inauguration ceremony will involve the participation of the Nevesinje mayor, school director, teachers and pupils, and representatives of the French Battle Group from Mostar. The unveiling of a visibility plaque will be followed by distributions of pens to the kids. All local media and newspapers are welcome to this event.

Avis Benes – OHR:

Before we proceed with your questions, I would like to kindly ask you once again to try to come on time for the beginning of the press conference, as we are also doing our best to start on time; even more so bearing in mind the fact that some of you who do not come on time are not journalists.

Questions and Answers

A: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): Question for OHR – You probably saw in our newscast last night and the night

before the press release of the Unified Organization of War Soldiers [JOB] and the reaction of the Cantonal Prosecutor Mirsad Resulovic. What JOB claims is that they already feel certain sanctions – they cannot get a certificate from the Court that they are not subject to criminal investigation which is required for issuance of the new passport, for instance, or employment – even though the Hague has not yet confirmed the indictments. I would like to know if the OHR has some position on this issue?

A: Avis Benes: The OHR has received a couple of letters and complaints by some individuals who have been complaining about this issue. A representative of the Independent Judicial Commission met with the Cantonal Prosecutor and President of the Cantonal Court. Then it was confirmed that there was a certain number of people against whom criminal investigation has been underway. However, it is not something that can be changed by the Cantonal Court itself. This is all I can tell you on behalf of the OHR. We have made inquiries about these cases and at this point of time we cannot change rules that exist. You should refer this question to the addresses of others as well, i.e. addresses of those who set such conditions.

Q: Miljenko Karacic (HRT Zagreb): Upon the recent announcement of the HR on reform of the judiciary system in BIH, the IJC reacted by abolishing a number of courts or their merger with the first-instance courts. Could you tell us what kind of impact this decision will have on the courts in Mostar. As you know, there are 6 Municipal Courts and 1 for the Central Zone.

A: Avis Benes: I think that in the line with the new re-organization there might be two Municipal Courts for Mostar and a court for the Central Zone. We may talk about additional details once I check with my colleagues from the Independent Judicial Commission. *(Later the correction was made – it is proposed that there will be only one court for Mostar)*