Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

Avis Benes, OHR Spokesperson: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning and welcome to the press conference of International Organisations seated in Mostar. On behalf of the OHR, we have 3 brief points for you today. The first one refers to the OHR expectations regarding the moving of the Mostar City Administration. You will later get my first two statements in writing – my colleagues have the statement in English so there is no need for translation.

OHR (South) has been informed that the Mostar City Administration will be moving from the Central Zone Court building to the former UPFM building by the end of the month of June, and will therefore be fully in place in the new premises by 01 July 2002. Mayor Jahic has informed the OHR about this latest plan. The OHR is expecting the process to go in accordance with what has been announced since it is high time that the space occupied by the City Administration in the Court building was returned to its original use: hosting a court. You will remember the EC donations for the building. The OHR also wish to call upon City authorities to ensure that the moving is also an opportunity for a full and functional merge of the City Administration. So much on the even we hope is soon to happen.

My second point is a reminder of a Mostar Fair Play football tournament. The citizens of Mostar and you yourselves surely remember that, upon the initiative of the Turkish Consulate in Mostar, in the summers of 2000 and 2001 there was a Football Tournament organised under the title “Mostar Fair Play”. The tournament has been played for the third year now and has become a tradition and the organisor, among others, is the newly-established Sports Association of Mostar. This summer’s

“Mostar Fair Play” Football Tournament is to take place next week – from Monday, June 24, to Friday, June 28, 2002. 15 teams will participate, including the City of Mostar, the 6 Mostar Municipalities, Croatian Consulate, Turkish and US Consulates, SFOR, IPTF, UNHCR, OHR & journalists’ teams. We wish them all good luck. The OHR fully supports sports events of this kind, the events that promote tolerance and fair-play, and we call upon the citizens to attend the tournament and thus contribute to having the tournament played in a positive and friendly atmosphere as was the case so far.

The third point I would like to raise pertains to the visit of the High Representative to this region. You will have received the Media Advisory saying the High Representative is making a tour today and tomorrow. He has visited Croat returnees to a village near Bugojno and then he will proceed to Livno – he is on his way there as we speak. He will also be hosted in a call-in-programme by Radio Livno. One thing I would like you to pay particular attention to and to report on it – especially electronic media as this event is due this afternoon – is the public forum that will take place at 17:00 hours at Royal Hotel in Siroki Brijeg. Mr. Ashdown, the High Representative, will directly address citizens and will briefly elaborate on his vision of BiH and will be open for questions. So, the public forum is not specifically meant for either journalists or politicians but the broadest spectre of the population. All citizens who would like to express some of their concerns or to ask questions are welcome. Journalists are also welcome to attend, although the idea is not for journalists to pose questions as they will have a separate opportunity to do so at the press conference due Thursday at 13:00 in this very room. So this is more of a vox populi event, a kind of interaction as the High Representative does care to hear directly from people what they have to say. The High Representative will be in Siroki Brijeg tomorrow as well. There has been a change to the schedule of his visit that we sent out to you yesterday, so we will additionally send you

the updated programme of the visit: the HR will not pay the visit to the Ambulanta, but will meet the Head of the Siroki Brijeg Municipality and the representatives of the Municipal Council instead. Tomorrow, at 09:45 hours, in the Municipal Council building, there will be a brief media address by the High Representative and the Siroki Brijeg Mayor. Apart from this, Mr. Ashdown will pay a visit to FEAL Company and there will be a photo opportunity there. The High Representative will also hold a press conference in this very room tomorrow at 13:00 hours and, at 14:00 hours, he will do what he could not during his previous visit to Mostar due to bad weather conditions – the High Representative will visit the Old Bridge site and there will also be a photo opportunity there. The HR will conclude his visit by a visit to a village situated near the road to Sarajevo – he will visit Croat returnees in the village of Radesine near Konjic. Should you have any other questions, feel free to contact our Press Office. That would be all on behalf of the OHR. Now I give the floor to Richard of the OSCE.

Richard Medic, OSCE Spokesperson: Thank you, Avis. I have two points for you today. The first one refers to the visit of the Head of OSCE Mission to BiH which ended last night. Over the last 3 days, Ambassador Beecroft visited Trebinje, Ljubuski, Siroki Brijeg and Mostar. Beside the visit to our Mostar Regional Centre staff and the staff of our Field Offices and the Political Resource Centres, the Ambassador also met with a huge number of representatives of various segments of society – with figures from the fields of politics, culture, business and religion, as well as with government officials and with students. The main focus of the Ambassador's visit was education because the OSCE will, in cooperation with international and local organisations, with education experts, develop a new strategy for education including the legislative reform, monitoring of the situation in the field, initiating the building of institutional capacity on all the levels. The strategy details will be

released at a later date.

My second point is actually a reminder: tomorrow, June 20, is the final deadline for the voter registration for the forthcoming elections. According to the Election Commission web-page, only 4000 BiH citizens residing in Croatia have registered so far. Therefore, I appeal to Croat(ian) media to encourage their readers and audience, young people and returnees in particular, to register by the end of the day tomorrow. There will be no other opportunity for those who failed to register, as there will be no extension of the deadline. So, on October, 5 they will not be in a position to influence the future of their country unless they register. Thank you.

Sanja Alikalfic, UNHCR: Good day to all of you on behalf of the UNHCR. Our today's statement concerns the tenants of the Buffer settlement who are a part of the reconstruction project by the FBiH Ministry of Social Affairs and DPs. According to the Agreement between UNHCR and Mostar Old Town municipality, the Buffer is meant to provide temporary accommodation, up to six months for families who are occupying other people's property and are included in a reconstruction project, so the PLIP implementation in Mostar is accelerated.

On the basis of a declaration from the Federation Ministry of Social Affairs office in Mostar that 31 families are included in the reconstruction project, they have been accepted in the Buffer settlement. The six months period of accommodation in the Buffer has already expired for the majority of them, although they have not yet received any building material under the reconstruction project of the above mentioned Ministry.

As this issue has seriously affected the proper functioning of the Buffer settlement, and our activities in the area of Mostar, UNHCR hopes that the matter will finally be addressed by Federation Ministry. The matter will also be discussed at

the highest level between UNHCR OCM Sarajevo and the Ministry in the coming days in order to identify a quick resolution of the issue.

The second point is a reminder. We would like to remind that the process of re-registration of FRY refugees will be over tomorrow, on Thursday, June 20. The re-registration has been organised by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and has now been going on for three months. It concerns the refugees who had previously registered under the Temporary Admission Instruction of May 1999. This announcement is therefore a reminder for persons falling into this category but have not yet re-registered. They should therefore immediately approach their respective municipal bodies not to miss the deadline and risk to be de-registered and loose their TA refugee status. Thank you very much.

Kirsten Haupt, UNMiBH Spokesperson: Good morning. First I have to apologise for a little mishap in the English version of my statement. I do not know the reason why, but there is a wrong date in the English statement so I am kindly asking all those who took the English version to correct the date to June 19. Thank you.

I have two issues today both related to the Trebinje area.

First of all, UNMIBH would like to commend the PSC Trebinje for their security arrangements on 8 June in Kljuc, Gacko municipality, when the first reconstructed mosque in the Trebinje area was inaugurated. About 350 people from Sarajevo, Dubrovnik and Mostar attended the ceremony. The Chief of Staff of the PSC Trebinje, as well as the Chief of Uniformed Police, were both present at this event. Their presence was also welcomed by the participants in the ceremony. By their professional organisation of the security detail for this inauguration ceremony, the PSC Trebinje, in this case, clearly showed their support for the overall process of normalisation and reconciliation.

However, I have another incident to report that happened in Trebinje. Namely, on June 13, once again a Bosniak citizen of Trebinje was harassed by a group of 6 juveniles in the old town of Trebinje. They reportedly banged at the entrance door of his house and threatened that they would return with a Kalashnikow to shoot him. UNMIBH strongly condemns this incident and calls on the police in Trebinje to investigate this case vigorously. Although the police state that the involvement of juveniles in general crime in Trebinje area is low, UNMIBH notes with great concern that the involvement of juveniles in return-related incidents is particularly high. The police need also to investigate those who are using these juveniles to prevent normalisation. Also, parents must be held accountable as they are legally responsible for juveniles of minor age. And school directors also need to be proactive and work with the police on prevention of juvenile involvement in crime, in particular in return-related crime. Thank you.

LtC. Rambaud, MNDSE Spokesperson: Good morning, I will be very short as I have no statement for today but will reply to your questions if any.

Avis Benes, OHR Spokesperson: We have been asked by another international organisation, i.e. by the ICRC, to draw your attention to a piece of information they have for you.

Zlatko Santic, ICRC: The International Red Cross is organising a press conference that will be held on the ICRC premises in Mostar (Rondo) on Friday, June 21. We would there fore like to invite you to attend as the issue of the missing persons as an extremely significant one and makes a part of the ICRC mandate. As our Media Advisory reads, time will be given to you for your questions. Thank you.

Avis Benes, OHR Spokesperson: And now we move onto your questions. Any questions. Since not, have a nice day and

see you at tomorrow’s press conference of the High Representative.