Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	• The High Representative welcomes the decision by the House of Representatives to adopt the Law on Ministries • HR at CSA ceremony • OHR(S) supports Mostar Business Incubator Project
OSCE	Richard Medic	• HNC Government must be urgently formed
SFOR	Maj. Fix	• Activation of the MN CIS Unit

Avis Benes – OHR

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the press conference of the international organisations functioning and operating in Mostar.

On behalf of the OHR we will have three or rather four brief issues to mention.

The first is about yesterday's adoption of the Law on Ministries by the BiH House of Representatives. The High Representative welcomes the decision by the House of Representatives to adopt the Law on Ministries. The High Representative would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister and the Government, both for their role in drafting the law and sponsoring it in the House of Representatives. This law, and the way it has been adopted by the institutions of BiH, represents and important milestone in establishing effective and efficient state government. It shows that the institutions of BiH are ready to take responsibility for crucial legislation. In particular, the

High Representative welcomes the brave and necessary decisions to rationalise and streamline state institutions. He now urges the House of Peoples also to adopt the law as soon as possible. The OHR would also like to reaffirm three related points. First, that the Council of Ministers will play its full role in tax policy as defined by the Constitution of BiH. Second, that the responsibilities and the independent authority of the Communications Regulatory Authority remain unchanged by this law. And third, that the issue of the responsibilities of ministries with regard to immigration and asylum may need further consideration.

The second thing is also to do with the High Representative and his activities. You might have learned that his visit to Brcko today has been cancelled due to the weather conditions, but tomorrow in Sarajevo he will be one of the guest speakers at a ceremony to mark the set up of the Civil Service Agency. The host at the ceremony will be Jakob Finci, the Director of BiH Civil Service Agency and other guest speakers include, Adnan Terzic, BiH Prime Minister and Michael Humphreys, Head of the European Commission in BiH.

The High Representative will highlight that the CSA will in particular stand as a guarantor for a professional, independent, efficient, apolitical and merit-based civil service through the full implementation of the Civil Service Law, an agency that will protect the integrity of the Civil Service in BiH. The CSA is responsible for the transparent and professional recruitment of civil servants at state-level including for the appointment of Heads of some of the most vital Agencies and institutions for an effective functioning and governance of the state.

The third thing concerns this region. I believe that at this moment many of your colleagues are present at the presentation of Mostar Business Incubator Project. OHR would like to extend its support to the Mostar Business Incubator project, which is officially being opened today by the City of Mostar and the

European Commission. The Business Incubator project – a supportive environment in which people will be helped to start and manage new enterprises – will certainly encourage new businesses, create job opportunities and contribute to achieving economic growth. Moreover, this project will provide means of income generation for citizens of this region and will also contribute to the overall economic development of the City of Mostar.

Support of private enterprises and small businesses, job creation and business advisory support which are essentials to this project are also part of the "Job and Justice" agenda which should be one of the top priorities in this country. OHR is very happy to see such a project being implemented and would like to congratulate all those who made it possible.

With regards to the fourth issue we shall remain in the sphere of economic issues. In any case this has been announced already, but I am not sure you are all aware that at the yesterday's press conference in Sarajevo the OHR has released its usual three-month economic newsletter and the latest issue has just been released. It can be found on our web page in all languages. It deals with the onset of progress in some key spheres in the recent period and there are some very interesting conclusions. Among them is the fact that the progress in the privatisation of small and medium-sized business in both entities is ongoing at an encouraging pace and problems exist in the sphere of privatisation of larger businesses. Another thing concerning that issue is that, contrary to some predictions, the effect of privatisation on employment in both entities is not negative. Transition will, of course, lead to extinguishing of some places, but in the long term it will result in creation of more work places and in the meantime the authorities can take steps to disburden social costs. The bulletin also contains a number of statistical data and I believe we do not have enough time to sum them up, but this truly is a very good material if one

wishes to explore the issue of economic problems. One of these statistical pieces states that in the first nine months of the last year trade deficiency in BiH comprised of 5.2 billion KM. Thus, the urgency of development of export sector has never been more apparent and this is one of the reasons why the BiH authorities must busy themselves with economic reform. And just one more thing. If someone is experiencing problems with access to the Internet they can call into our office and we will help them out and I believe that the final PLIP statistics from up to and including the month of December will be released in the next couple of days, so you will also be able to see this published on the Internet. This is all on behalf of the OHR. I give the floor to Richard and the OSCE.

OSCE – Richard Medic

Just one point from the OSCE today.

Although almost four months have passed since the October elections, the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton has not yet formed a government. The fact that we currently have a 'caretaker' government effectively means that much of the urgent work to be done in this canton has ground to a halt.

From OSCE's perspective, we are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to meet the new cantonal government Minister for Construction, Urban Planning and Environment, so that the key issues surrounding the implementation of property laws in 2003 may be addressed.

We also await the new Minister for Education, whom we will urge to continue the education reform process by addressing the five pledges outlined in the strategy paper presented to PIC in November last year, and which you will receive after the Press Conference.

In addition, OSCE will call on the incoming Minister for Health, Labour, and Social Affairs to urgently address the long-pending legislation on Social Welfare, Civil Victims of

War and the Protection of Families with Children. Although we understand that cantonal budgetary resources are scarce, establishing a legal framework to ensure the minimal level of social welfare for its citizens should be a priority for the incoming Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Government.

For such core issues to be addressed, a cantonal government must be urgently formed, a sustainable and workable budget must be passed, and the interests of the electorate must take precedence over political party feuding.

That is all on the part of the OSCE today. If I could just remind you that we do have the five pledges from the strategy paper presented to PIC last year and also some posters on the Education Reform Media Award.

Avis Benes – OHR

Thank you Richard. And now I give the floor to Major Fix.

Major Fix – SFOR

This morning I have just one thing for you. The disbanding of the French Divisional Signal company and the activation of the Multinational Command and Information system Unit (MN CIS U) will take place on the 8th of October 2003 in Mostar-Ortijes base.

The creation of this new multinational unit puts an end to the restructuring process, which began three months ago and led to the downsizing from division to brigade.

The MN CIS U is 50 French and Spanish soldiers strong. Its main mission will be to provide the brigade operation centre with satellite transmission assets in the field as well as in the base. Main part of the unit will be located in Mostar where small detachment will serve as support to the German-Italian battle group in Rajlovac.

The unit will be under the command of French Captain Marc FABRE during his six month mission. By early July 2003, Germany and Italy will be also equally represented in this unit. This is all I had to say today.

Avis Benes – OHR

Thank you Major Fix. And now we are open to your questions.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Zvonimir Jukic, (ONASA): I have a question for the OHR and it is regarding the Declaration on Mostar plan delivered to you by the Party for BiH. Representatives of the OHR have been saying that during recent months no one has been addressing them regarding this issue. The OHR has confirmed that it received this document last Thursday. I am interested in the OHR's attitude regarding the aforementioned.

A: Avis Benes – OHR: The information you have is correct. I can once again confirm that we received that document last week. However, seeing as this document is quite long, it is being translated and processed at the moment. We are glad that the SBiH have submitted this sort of a concrete proposal and we hope that all others interested in the future of the City of Mostar will also follow with their proposals.

Q: Ivan Bakovic, (HTV Mostar): I have two questions, one for Ms Benes and one for Mr. Medic. Ms Benes, is it true that the OHR has set a deadline for the Speaker of the HNC Assembly to appoint the HNC Prime Minster designate. The OHR has kept silent for a while and it has been quite a long time now.

A: Avis Benes – OHR: The position of the OHR is that the government should be formed as soon as possible and that primarily this is the responsibility of the parties in government formation and we expect them to come to an agreement as soon as possible. It is not necessary to set any deadlines seeing as two months upon the announcement of the

election results everyone is aware of the fact that this process has to go ahead and that all delays should be eliminated.

Q:Ivan Bakovic (HTV Mostar): I have to say that you have not answered my question. I shall therefore repeat my question. Has the OHR set a deadline for the Speaker of the HNC Assembly to appoint the PM?

A: Avis Benes – OHR: I believe I have answered your question. I shall just repeat my answer then. The OHR is not here to set deadlines. It is very clear that once the election results have been announced political parties should begin to do their job. The OHR is conducting talks with political parties, however at the end of the day it is their responsibility when they will perform their job and our stand on this is that this should be done as soon as possible.

Q: Ivan Bakovic, (HTV Mostar): The question is: who is responsible for the fact that this canton has no government yet?

A: Avis Benes – OHR: I think it is absolutely clear who is responsible for the government formation process. Journalists should be familiar with this and the OHR should not have to explain this.

Q: Ivan Bakovic, (HTV Mostar): A question for Mr. Medic. If I am not mistaken, this is the OSCE's publication on Education Reform?

A: Richard Medic – OSCE: OSCE is the leading agency on education reform as far as the international organisations go, and obviously this is in co-operation with other international organisations and local authorities.

Q: Ivan Bakovic, (HTV Mostar): I have just skimmed through this part that should be in Croatian language. My question is: do you have a language lector or have you paid someone else to

translate it?

A: Richard Medic – OSCE: I’m sorry but I do not know the details of who edited and proofread the publication, but if you’d like I can find out and give you a call.

A: Avis Benes – OHR: Any more questions? No? Thank you very much for your attention and see you next time.