Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	• OHR condemns attacks on municipal housing officials • War crimes trials in BiH
OSCE	Richard Medic	• RCD Mostar bids farewell
SFOR	Maj. Fix	• No statement

Avis Benes – OHR

Good day ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the press conference of the international organisations seated and functioning in Mostar. I think we all know each other. This time we are without our name-tags.

On behalf of the OHR, I have two brief issues today.

The first one refers to the reports we received recently and has to do with attacks on the officials of the Municipal Housing Offices. OHR has been again receiving reports on the individual attacks on some Municipal Housing officials in this area. Any attacks of such kind can be only seen as an attempt to obstruct the process of property laws implementation and intimidate those who are implementing the law. This is the third such attack in recent months. We also call on the relevant police force to commit themselves to bringing the perpetrators to justice. How the authorities respond to attacks like these is a test of their commitment to modern standards of policing and the rule of law.

The second issue is just a reminder of what is happening in Sarajevo at the moment – you have been informed about this

already. I am talking about the Conference on processing the war crimes in BiH. It has been jointly organised by the ICTY and the OHR and it has been ongoing for three days already at the OHR premises. The ICTY conference at the OHR is exploring modalities for trying war crimes in BiH. The Conference is still ongoing and no conclusions have been reached yet – timelines and number of cases have not been yet established. Preliminary conclusions will be sent to PIC; final conclusions are due by mid February. We welcome the lead ICTY is taking on the matter. Whatever the solution or timelines, the ICTY involvement in planning and implementation is a key condition for success. I believe a Press Release on preliminary conclusions will be issued when the Conference ends today.

And I believe that whoever may wish can once again have a copy of the EU program for the official inaugural ceremony of EU Police Mission in BiH and the plan of Mr Solana's visit.

That is all on behalf of the OHR for the time being. Now I give the floor to Richard and the OSCE.

OSCE – Richard Medic

Good morning and just one very short point from the OSCE today. Mr Thomas Timberman, OSCE Mostar Regional Director for the past year, is leaving the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina to take up a post with the OSCE Mission to Croatia. OSCE would like to thank Mr Timberman for his untiring contribution to OSCE's work in this region. Mr Dieter Leonhard will be acting Regional Centre Director until a new Director is appointed. And I would also like to read one short section of Mr. Timberman's farewell statement to Mostar. And I quote: "I've fortunate particularly to get to know a number of media representatives here and I want to tell you how impressed I have been with the exciting, outspoken, sometimes irresponsible, but always interesting print and electronic media coverage. I very much hope we will meet again here in Mostar or when you visit Zagreb."

That is all we have today. Thank you.

Avis Benes – OHR

Thank you Richard. Major Fix has nothing special to tell you on behalf of SFOR today, but he will be open for any questions you may have.

Questions:

Q: Ivan Bakovic, (HTV Mostar): A question for the OHR. What is happening with the appointment of the new cantonal Government? What is happening with the appointment of the PM designate, which has been subject to some reservation as far as I know? To my knowledge, proposals have been delivered. What is the reason for the hold-up in the process of the Government formation?

A: Avis Benes – OHR: Let me first give an explanation. When it comes to the PM designate, that very position is not subject to the OHR's vetting. When it comes to the appointment of cantonal Government, then you have to check that with the political parties involved in the process.

Q: Mirsad Behram (RTV Mostar): If possible, I'll just add to this question. Will this Canton have to wait again for eight or eleven months for its Government to be formed? I even have the information that you received the names of the candidates and that the checking is underway. Could you, please, comment?

A: Avis Benes – OHR: In any case, it would be impermissible if the process of cantonal Government formation took as long as it did last time. The aim is to establish the Government as soon as possible and that the citizens of this canton do not remain at the receiving end, bearing the consequences of that process. We hope the politicians will be reasonable enough and will establish the Government in the shortest time possible,

and I also have to say that the rapidity of the Government formation process should not go to the expense of the quality of that process. When it comes to specific names you mentioned, I think the best thing would be to approach the Assembly and they would be able to provide you with the correct information.

Q:Ivan Bakovic (HTV Mostar): This question also refers to the Government formation. What you have said so far is the general answer everyone is giving. I am interested to learn how much the OHR knows – what does the problem lie in: the Assembly, political parties or the OHR?

A: Avis Benes – OHR: I will tell you something, which I believe is clear and concrete enough: the problem definitely does not lie with the OHR.

Q: Zvonimir Jukic (ONASA, FTV): I have three questions for the OHR today. The first one is of a technical nature. It is connected to this attack on the Municipal Housing official. We used to receive concrete information from the UNMIBIH and their Spokesperson on such issues. Who do we turn to now? I am interested to know whether the EUPM will have their regional representative / Spokesperson here. The second question is connected to the Government formation. According to the information that I have, there is some disagreement in opinions of the OHR offices in Mostar and Sarajevo when it comes to the PM designate Miroslav Coric, and I am interested to know whether this is correct and what is the reason why no decision has been made yet. The third question is about the report of the OHR Anti-corruption team, which has been delivered to the City Administration a long time ago and concerns the work of the City Authorities. I am primarily interested in the issue of the illegal construction in Mostar, has any action been taken with regard to that?

A: Avis Benes – OHR: Thanks for your questions. As far as the third question is concerned, I cannot confirm with certainty

that the OHR Anti-corruption Team made their report on illegal construction for entire Mostar.

Q: Zvonimir Jukic (ONASA): This was a question relating to the Central Zone.

A: Avis Benes – OHR: As for the work of the City Administration, I can tell you that the OHR has had the same position for months regarding their work and that is that they should start solving those issues as soon as possible. As for the first question you raised, the EUPM has started working in our area of responsibility. We have already had some meetings with them. As for their Spokesperson for this region, I cannot tell you if they will have one and you should address that question to the EUPM directly. As you may be aware, they have a Spokesperson in Sarajevo. His name is Jan Oskar Solnes and if you need any additional information on his contact details, the OHR can forward it to you. As for the second question raised, I can only deny the position that you presented and say that there is no disagreement between the OHR Mostar and Sarajevo. In any case, OHR is not the reason for the Government not being formed. And once again, I will repeat what I have already said, but maybe it is not clear enough, the position of the PM designate is not a post requiring the OHR vetting.

Q: Pejo Gasparevic (HINA): Avis, the take-over of the Council of Ministers is taking place at the time of the visit of a high-ranking ICTY delegation to BiH. Today, an EU delegation, headed by Mr. Solana, is in BiH also. Are these events a sign of a new, preventive IC policy towards BiH?

A: Avis Benes – OHR: I can tell you that I cannot, in any way, confirm the theory you have presented. The ICTY Conference had been planned long ago and the start of the EU's work could only happen in January and it was uncertain when the Council of Ministers would be established, so it could not be brought into any connection in any way. So, again, I cannot confirm

that idea you presented.

Q: Stanislava Maric (Croat Radio Mostar): Avis, can you tell us whether Carla del Ponte has brought new indictments with her?

Also, at the last press conference you said that the permits for construction of mosques in Bijeljina and Stolac exist, that they have been issued, but the Mayor of Stolac Municipality came out with the statement that no permit was issued for the construction of the mosque in Stolac.

A: Avis Benes – OHR: I cannot confirm anything in reply to your first question, but I can advise you to direct that question to the ICTY in Sarajevo or address the issue directly to the ICTY office in the Hague.

As for the second issue, all I can say is to confirm that the position of the OHR is that for the mosque in Stolac, necessary and valid permit has been obtained and I am not talking here about the construction documentation. The permit was issued by the Federation authorities.

Q: Zoran Zekic (Slobodna Dalmacija): I have a question for Major Fix on security issues. I am interested in the recent power cut. Did it cause problems to SFOR or have any consequences for SFOR, did you take any certain security measures in ensuring your facilities and the city. The circumstances caused by the cut allowed for various sorts of crime, such as robberies etc.

A: Major Fix – SFOR: In connection to the first part of your question, we know that there has been a power cut, which affected the city of Mostar. When it comes to our premises and facilities, we have our own power plants, I think two or three, and we are autonomous in that sense. And the second part of the question concerning the security in the city, robberies and so on were perhaps possible, but we have not taken any measures so far for possible risks, which would be a

consequence of something of that kind happening, but rest assured that we are regularly patrolling the city and that we are present here at every moment. But, I will say that, in the first place, the local police bear most responsibility for security of the citizens of this city, as well as the entire community and region. However, and just to link this up with your question concerning security, in recent days, during holidays and celebrations, we have not noticed any firings.

Avis Benes – OHR: Any more questions? If not, then thank you for your attention.