

OHR's Statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

OHR, Oleg Milisic

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High Representative Supports State Level Ombudsmen Institution

The High Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, has emphasised the fact that BiH's future can only be premised on respect for human rights. He made this point during a meeting yesterday at the OHR with Federation BiH Ombudsmen, Vera Jovanovic, Branka Raguz and Esad Muhibic.

The High Representative noted that the new State Law on Ombudsmen is already in force, and he said he was pleased that the Law adopted by BiH's Parliament is in line with recommendations received from the Venice Commission.

The Law includes provisions for the Entity Ombudsman's Offices to transition into a State-level institution by 31 December 2006. The High Representative emphasised that "appointments to this institution must be absolutely independent". The High Representative said that he stands ready to support the process of preparing an initial framework for the future functioning of the State Ombudsman's institution.

Discussion at the meeting covered the respect for human rights generally in BiH; how this can be improved and how to ensure that all levels of Government implement recommendations made by the Ombudsman's Office. There was agreement that an increased awareness of the role of the Ombudsmen, as an element in strengthening democracy in BiH, is required. "BiH needs effective structures of governance and a civil sector to monitor their work," the High Representative said.

High Representative To Plant A Tree In Ambassadors Alley

The High Representative, Christian Swartz-Schilling, will plant a tree in Ambassadors Alley at one o'clock today. He will make a short statement there afterwards. Journalists interested in covering this event should contact the Stari Grad Municipality's press office for further details.

BiH Law on Obligations in 2006

Principal Deputy High Representative Larry Butler will call on the BiH authorities to take the necessary steps as soon as possible to enact the BiH Law on Obligations. Ambassador Butler will be one of the speakers tomorrow at an event marking the third anniversary of the Sarajevo Economic Regional Development Agency (SERDA). Ambassador Butler will point out that falling interest rates, rising investment and one of the most stable currencies in Southeast Europe mean that BiH is at last experiencing forward economic momentum. In addition, the new VAT system is paying dividends in terms of increased government revenue and better regulation of the commercial sector. However, outdated and conflicting commercial legislation remains a major drag on business expansion and job creation.

"A massive step forward in resolving this will be the enactment of a new BiH Law on Obligations to replace the mishmash of laws that have emerged from the old 1978 Yugoslav Law on Obligations, which was a product of the pre-Internet, pre-Global economy era," Ambassador Butler will point out. He will call on the Regional Development Agencies to lobby for the enactment of the new law before the end of 2006.

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Journo:

Will OHR issue any press release on HR planting a tree?

Oleg Milisic, OHR:

No. There will be no statement afterwards.