

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

EU-hosted Press Conferences

Welcome to the OHR/EUSR's Office. We have with us the OSCE, EUFOR, NATO and EUPM. In future we will also have the EUSR, and other organizations as required, including the EC.

Budget

Tomorrow the BiH State Budget for 2005, which has been approved by the CoM and the Presidency, will be discussed by the HoR.

It is worth noting that this is the first time the BiH authorities have been able to table an agreed draft budget for parliamentary debate this early in the annual business cycle – in other countries, of course, the budget for this year would already have been drafted, debated and agreed last year, but holding the debate in January is nonetheless a considerable improvement on previous years, when it wasn't held until the late spring or early summer.

Unless the draft budget is adopted temporary funding would have to be allocated on the basis of last year's budget, and that would mean that institutions – in particular the newly established institutions, including SIPA, the Defence Ministry and the ITA – would not have enough money to operate.

As BiH assumes the administrative contours of a normal European state, rationalizing its operational structure, pruning expenses at intermediary levels of government and making the State institutions fully functional, budgetary constraints are likely to loom larger and larger in political

debate – and that's as it should be. More has to be done with less. Put another way, citizens have to get better value for money from government. The fact that the budget debate is happening this week and not several months from now is an indication that the authorities are beginning to understand this.

SDHR to visit Mostar

The Senior Deputy High Representative, Werner Wnendt, is visiting Mostar today, where he will meet newly elected Mostar city officials. Ambassador Wnendt will meet Mayor of Mostar Ljubo Beslic, Heads of Departments of Mostar City Administration, President of Mostar City Council Murat Coric, and councillors of Mostar City Council. During these meetings Ambassador Wnendt will once again reiterate the importance of speedy implementation of the Mostar Decision for the benefit of all citizens of Mostar who are entitled to expect the benefits of a unified, functional and normal European city administration.

During this visit, Ambassador Wnendt will also visit Mostar Airport , where he will meet the Deputy Director of the Airport, Izet Sahovic. He will be briefed on some of the latest Airport infrastructure investments, which can have a significant knock-on effect on developing the enormous economic potential of the Mostar region, including tourism and business development.