

OHR's Statement at the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference in Banja Luka

Court of BiH Detention Facility Built

The BiH House of Representatives at its session tomorrow will consider a package of legislation that establishes the pre-trial detention facility on the grounds of the Court of BiH. This package consists of the Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions, Detention and other Measures of BiH and the Law on the amendments to the BiH Criminal Procedure Code.

As the Court of BiH increases its capacities, trying some of the most serious crimes committed in BiH, there is a growing need for detention facilities that will hold increasing number of accused in a growing number of cases. The Court of BiH is one of BiH's flagship reforms underlining BiH's commitment to the Rule of Law. This legislative package needs to be in place if the detention measures imposed by the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina are to be implemented. The secure detention facility itself will be ready to receive its first remand prisoners by early March.

This detention facility will serve as a vehicle for continued prison reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina and will answer the urgent need for BiH detention facilities in the criminal justice system. It would allow the Court to better manage its own pre-trial detainees.

The Legal package provides for fair treatment of prisoners and detainees, disciplinary procedures for prisoners and detainees as well as staff working in the respective institution.

The BiH Ministry of Justice and the Entity Ministries of Justice fully support this project.

OHR Economic Report for December 2004

I have brought along copies of the OHR Monthly Economic Report. As you know, this brings together statistics provided by several different agencies and identifies the principal trends in the economy. The latest report is for December – a little later than usual because some of the agencies delay the release of their statistics due to the year-end holidays. We'll get the January issue to you as soon as possible.

The December report offers an overview for the whole of 2004. The most notable development last year was the very impressive performance of the KM. As the report notes, from January to December 2004, the Central Bank sold a net total of KM 647.2 million, which means that over the course of the year holders of Euro and other foreign currencies exchanged more money into KM than the holders of KM exchanged into other currencies. The corresponding increase in the BiH money supply boosted the broad (though still modest) upsurge in economic activity – without causing inflation.

Both the Sarajevo and the Banja Luka stock markets also did well in 2004, both of them finishing the year with substantial increase in turnover. The most likely explanation is that foreign investors are increasingly interested in generally undervalued BiH securities.

If there is a moral here it may be that money talks – in this case in a good way. Investors will put their money into this country if they believe it makes good business sense to do so. The performance of the two stock exchanges shows that BiH can attract commercial funds. This only highlights the urgency of unblocking the privatisation process so that strategic companies can be privatised through substantial investment

that creates jobs.

PDHR to Visit Banja Luka, Kozarska Dubica

Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays is in Banja Luka on a two-day visit during which he will hold talks with senior RS Government officials, including outgoing RS Finance Minister Branko Krsmanovic. The meeting with Mr Krsmanovic will focus on the unsustainable cost of governance in BiH. There will be a short statement for the media after the meeting at 13:25 on Thursday 17 February 2005.

This afternoon Ambassador Hays will chair a roundtable discussion with professors and students of the Banja Luka Faculty of Economics. The object of this roundtable is to identify the principal shortcomings in the way this country's economy is being managed, and examine ways of making the economy work better.

All media are cordially invited to cover the whole of this event, which will take place from from 17:00 to 19:00, here at the International Press Centre .

Tomorrow, PDHR Hays will visit DIP "Kozara" in Kozarska Dubica. You have details on this visit in our media advisory.