

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

OHR Remains Completely Engaged

As you may know the Centre for European Integration Strategies has issued a report in which it analyses the issues related to the closure of OHR by the middle of next year.

OHR welcomes CEIS's contribution to the debate. The paper calls on the OHR to prioritise three critical issues: supporting constitutional change, securing BiH's borders and completing the transition to EUSR.

On constitutional change, the High Representative has already stated that he will be playing a key role in the issue after the elections, and has already held preliminary discussions with political parties. Moreover, there is a local and international consensus that the existing package will form the basis of discussion. Meanwhile, OHR remains politically engaged on the broad reform agenda – on policing, on public broadcasting, on fiscal sustainability, on higher education.

On the inviolability of borders, there is no need for the CEIS proposal. The declaration on the inviolability of BiH's borders already exists, namely the Dayton Agreement, all parties are bound by it.

On the transition to EUSR, the decision to begin preparations for the closure of the OHR reflects the assessment of the wider IC that BiH has made enough progress in peace implementation for transition to occur. Extraordinary powers such as the Bonn Powers cannot be maintained indefinitely. Maintaining OHR and the Bonn Powers implies slowing down BiH on its road to Europe. Key reforms cannot be imposed or forced through by use of Bonn Powers.

It is also important to note that the decision to close the OHR will be reviewed and confirmed by the PIC early next year, taking into account the overall situation in BiH and the region.

SDHR Bas-Backer Dialogue with NGOs

My second point this morning concerns the Senior Deputy High Representative, Peter Bas-Backer, who is visiting Prijedor today to chair a roundtable on civil society development. Today's meeting is part of a sustained effort to build a dialogue with activists throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina who are taking the initiative to move forward with projects that will improve citizens' lives.

Ambassador Bas-Backer will make a statement to the media, after the meeting.

Tomorrow Ambassador Bas-Backer will visit Drvar, where he will meet with representatives of the NGO Refugee Return Service. Discussion will focus on the status of return in Drvar Municipality. After the meeting, Ambassador Bas-Backer will make a short media statement.

Ambassador Bas-Backer will also visit the returnee settlement of Kecmanova Glavica where he will meet with returnees. He will then travel to Grahovo, where he will meet representatives of the Women Association of Grahovo and visit the Health Centre.

I've brought along a media advisory with full details of these events and opportunities for press coverage.