OHR’s Statement at the International Agency’s Joint Press Conference

Municipal Elections In Gornji Vakuf-Uskopolje

In a letter to the Acting President of the BiH Election Commission, Lidija Korac, the High Representative asked the Commission to take the necessary steps which will allow the municipal elections in Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje to take place in accordance with the BiH Election Law.

Currently the Interim Municipal Council, established by the High Representative’s Decision of 15 September 2001, governs the municipality.

In his letter, the High Representative informed Ms. Korac that [I quote] “in the light of progress that has been made in the integration of the municipality, I believe that it is now time to return Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje to a more normal situation and to bring this interim regime to a close.”

This letter enables the municipality of Gornji Vakuf-Uskopolje to hold municipal elections at the same time as the other municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

OHR Welcomes Radovanovic Initiative

The Defence Ministers South-East European Coordination Pact began a two-day meeting in Sarajevo today. The meeting was organised by the BiH Ministry of Defence under the BiH Defence Minister, Nikola Radovanovic.

OHR welcomes this meeting: peace and stability in the region, as well membership for all the region’s countries in the Euro-Atlantic community, can best be secured if the region’s defence establishments are actively cooperating with each other.

Such cooperation facilitates practical solutions to issues that are of

great concern to the region: arms control and non-proliferation of weapons, and the fight against terrorism. The fact that the meeting is being held in Sarajevo, hosted by the BiH Defence Minister signals a significant change in BiH and in South Eastern Europe.

A recent poll conducted by BiH's Centre for Strategic Studies shows that a majority (52 %) of BiH's citizens expect an improvement in security with the formation of the MoD. By taking this kind of lead the BiH Minister of Defence is developing understanding of the benefits of this institution and of the stability that closer co-operation and PfP association offers BiH's citizens.

Further cooperation and modernisation on the way to full membership of PfP will be the best way to provide tangible improvements in regional security.

PDHR Meets Cantonal Prime Ministers

Tomorrow afternoon at the OHR the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, will chair a two-hour meeting with the ten canton prime ministers, along with Federation Environment Minister Ramiz Mehmedagic and Federation Agriculture Minister Marinko Bozic.

This will be the third in a series of monthly meetings that Ambassador Hays has held with the prime ministers. These have emerged as a useful way of promoting cooperation among the cantons to promote economies of scale and develop natural synergies – key ways in which the cantons can improve the services they offer to citizens.

Tomorrow's meeting will focus on how to deal with flooding – caused by heavy rain but also by unsupervised logging and mining (leading to soil erosion and the silting of river beds) and other kinds of resource mismanagement. Participants will discuss

- The financial and institutional disorganization of the water sector
- Forestry in BiH
- The impact of illegal mining on the environment and water management

Cameras are invited to record the opening of the meeting, at 15.30 tomorrow afternoon at the OHR. We will be issuing a press release on the meeting’s conclusions.