

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

High Representative In Kuwait

The High Representative is on the second day of a two day visit to Kuwait, where he aims to encourage donations to the Foundation of Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery, and to promote BiH as an investment location.

In the course of the day he will be meeting with Crown Prince H.H. Sheikh Saad Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah and the Prime Minister H.E. Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir Al Sabah.

Yesterday, the High Representative met the Kuwaiti Finance Minister, Dr. Yousef Al Ebraheem. The High Representative also met with the Vice president of the Kuwaiti Chamber of Commerce, Ali Al Ganen, and representatives of the Kuwaiti business community.

OHR on Education Reform

OHR welcomes the yesterday's decision of the Council of Ministers to send the Law on Higher Education into Parliamentary Procedure.

BiH's Parliamentarians now have the opportunity to ensure the World Bank's \$42 million loan is secured, so giving much needed financial support to higher education, and ensuring students in Bosnia and Herzegovina get the education they need to meet the professional challenges and demands that lie ahead of them.

It is BiH's Parliamentarians that are now responsible for BiH meeting its obligations under the Bologna Process and the

Lisbon Recognition Convention, which will mean that BiH students will have education qualifications that are recognized outside BiH.

However, much more needs to be done in the education reform field. All Cantonal Ministers of Education have endorsed the 'Education Reform Strategy', which pledges to end duplication, cut waste of effort and resources in education and to fully harmonise Cantonal Education Laws with the BiH Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education.

Yet, there has been little or no progress in implementing these reforms, this fact could destroy BiH's hopes for a European future. I want to remind you that the High Representative was clear when said that he will hold all those education Ministers and their Ministries responsible for non compliance.

The High Representative Congratulates Parliament in Adoption of Intelligence Law

The High Representative extends his congratulations to the Parliamentary Assembly for adopting the Law on the Intelligence and Security Agency yesterday following months of careful deliberation.

The Parliamentary Assembly has seized the opportunity to create a modern, effective and democratically accountable Agency in line with the highest European standards, and, in so doing, has confirmed its willingness to play a full and active role in the reform process.

The High Representative also paid tribute to the newly established Defence and Security Policy Committee, who supported this process, and played an important role during the parliamentary procedure. They have shown that they understand that the spirit of compromise is the only way forward for BiH.

PDHR American Chamber of Commerce Speech

The Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, will be speaking at a lunch today organized by the American Chamber of Commerce. Ambassador Hays will note that:

- work is proceeding on rationalizing and modernizing the customs service under the new Indirect Taxation Administration
- Preparations are underway to introduce VAT, possibly by late 2005
- 15 business chambers will shortly be established around the country to deal with bankruptcy, enforcement of civil judgments and other business related judicial issues.
- A legislative package is currently before the respective governments or parliaments – including laws on Business Registration, Procurement, Accounting and Auditing, Public Enterprises, and Investment of Public Funds, as well as amendments to the federation Bankruptcy Law – which will significantly improve the BiH business environment.

Despite painfully slow progress, the BiH business-environment barometer is moving from “inclement” to “mild”.

Ambassador Hays will call for a “new consciousness” among businesspeople, who must “generate a sense of commercial confidence that rubs off on the political class.”

I have brought along copies of Ambassador Hays speech.