

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

Minister of Defence,

The OHR regrets that the governing coalition has not yet agreed on a candidate for BiH Minister of Defence. It is almost March, yet the BiH authorities have failed to fulfill the first and most basic requirement for Partnership for Peace membership thereby putting at risk the longterm security of every citizen of this country. The BiH authorities have been invited to submit a report to NATO in March outlining progress made. At this rate, there will be nothing to report, and members of the Alliance will be justifiably skeptical about BiH's readiness to join PfP.

The OHR also notes with great concern the failure of the Federation government to pass legislation required to harmonise Federation defence structures with the new BiH Law on Defence. The Federation is now in danger of undermining the new state level defence system and thus becoming BiH's impediment to membership in PfP. We urge the Federation authorities to act without delay to adopt these laws.

HR Meeting Joschka Fischer

Tomorrow afternoon, the High Representative will meet German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer at the OHR. Mr Fischer will be making a one-day visit to BiH. The Foreign Minister and the High Representative will discuss recent developments in BiH, including BiH's performance in meeting the requirements set out in the EU's Feasibility Study, and the requirements for membership of PfP. They will also discuss the possible transition from SFOR to an EU-led force. There will be a photo op at the start of the meeting, at 4.15.

HR Meeting Qatari Ambassador

The High Representative was scheduled to meet the Qatari Ambassador Ali Fahad Al Hajri this morning. However, the ambassador's flight to BiH has been delayed. This meeting is expected to take place tomorrow morning and we will alert you to press opportunities when we have a confirmed time. As you will recall, the High Representative and the Reisu-l-Ulema visited Qatar last year in April, when they met the Emir and the Foreign Minister. At that time they discussed a possible Qatari donation to the Foundation of Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery. The Ambassador will call on the High Representative to discuss Qatari cooperation with the Foundation. The High Representative will be joined by Beriz Belkic, the new Chair of the Executive Board of the Foundation and Reisu-l-Ulema, member of the Executive Board of the Foundation.

Talks with Cantonal Education Ms

The High Representative and Ambassador Robert Beecroft will be meeting Five Cantonal Education Ministers today at 12.30 to discuss implementation of education reforms. There will be a photo-op at the beginning of this meeting.