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

High Representative to Participate in Civil Society Forum

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will take part in a two-hour forum this afternoon at the Law Faculty of Sarajevo University. He will speak to young graduates about how they can contribute to the strengthening of civil society in BiH. This is easier said than done, since political and professional structures routinely exclude new ideas and new people. That prompts a lot of young people to think about emigrating, which is the basis of the brain drain. This brain drain is a potential demographic disaster for BiH – a disaster that must be averted. The High Representative will join Osman Topčagić of the Council of Ministers’ Directorate for European Integration, and postgraduates to analyse this issue and possibly come up with solutions. Media are invited to cover this event, which starts at 5 o’clock this evening. I’ve brought along a media advisory with the details.

Letter from SDHR Werner Wnendt

I’ve also brought along copies of a letter sent today to municipal employees in Mostar by Senior Deputy High Representative Werner Wnendt. In the letter Ambassador Wnendt, whom the High Representative has appointed his Special Envoy to Mostar, stresses that nothing will change in the day-to-day arrangements providing public services, as the city-municipalities remain in place until 15 March, and their heads will continue until then to be responsible for the efficient functioning of the local administration.

Ambassador Wnendt will supervise the implementation of the

Mostar Decision and a locally based Implementation Unit, headed by Richard Williams, former head of the Reconstruction and Return Task Force, will assist the local authorities in this.

Ambassador Wnendt stressed that he will make every effort to ensure that the new administration offers equal terms and conditions for all civil servants and public employees, as well as real opportunities for promotion for those who demonstrate their professionalism in the course of this year's implementation process.

I've brought along copies of the letter.

New BiH Privatisation Website to Be Launched

Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays will join Prime Ministers Terzic, Hadzipasic and Mikerevic tomorrow morning at 11.00 at the Joint Institutions Building to witness the launch of the new BiH privatization website. This website for the first time consolidates information on companies being privatized anywhere in BiH. Setting up this website has been one of the practical steps initiated by the Privatisation Working Group, which brings together all of the relevant ministries agencies and international organizations under the aegis of the BiH Economic Coordination Board. The Working Group is charged with unblocking the BiH privatization process so that it can start to generate the kind of investment volumes and new jobs generated by this process in other transition countries.

EUPM

The EUPM spokesperson isn't here this morning as he is engaged in arrangements to fly the body of Commissioner Frederiksen to Copenhagen – as you know, this was not possible yesterday because of the snow. He has asked me to convey the Mission's thanks to the media for your warm response in the wake of the tragic news of Commissioner Frederiksen's death. Jon Oskar

will be contactable on his cell phone this afternoon.