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

High Representative visits Kasindolska Street Families of Missing Persons

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will today meet with the families of missing persons from the Ilidza Municipality in Sarajevo at the request of Amor Masovic, the head of the Federation Commission for Missing Persons and exhumations..

The High Representative greatly admires the courage and strength that these families have shown since their loved ones were taken from them over a decade ago, and intends by this visit to underline his support for their efforts in raising public awareness of this terrible legacy of the war.

Across BiH families of all ethnic backgrounds are still seeking the truth about what happened to their loved ones, often just wishing that they could give them a dignified burial.

The High Representative will call for a renewed effort to the process of exchange of information which will enable a considerable number of the families that are still looking for their missing loved ones to find answers. He urges Governments to intensify their work and increase co-operation on the release of information giving the whereabouts of all missing persons.

It is of great significance that this process continues especially in the light of the reconciliation process in

Bosnia and Herzegovina, but most importantly to help those still searching for truth and justice.

High Representative Receives Innovators Award

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, has been awarded with the Great Medal of Honour concorus Lepine, on the occasion of the 102. International Exhibition of Innovations "Concours Lepine", held in Paris from 29 April to the 11 May.

International Exhibition of Innovations says this medal was awarded for his contribution to promoting innovation world-wide, and especially in BiH, by, for example, raising public awareness. Paddy Ashdown has said repeatedly that one of BiH's richest resources is the talent of its people. The reforms initiated by the Bulldozer Commission will play a major role in unlocking this talent for business, and promoting further innovation in BiH.

The award ceremony will be held at the Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Branislava Djurdjeva 10, Sarajevo) on Wednesday, June 25, at 14.00 hours.

HR welcomes progress in the fight against crime

As you may know, the Federation Customs Administration (FCA) has submitted criminal charges to the Prosecutors Office, Mostar, against the GIPI Company from Citluk for serious customs frauds including misdescription of goods (to avoid 'prelevmani' tax) and undervaluation.

These initial charges relate to a revenue loss of some 650,000 KM but with further charges to follow the total amount of fraud exposed by Customs Officers could be as high as 12 Million KM.

The extent of the fraud was discovered following advice and assistance from the Customs and Fiscal Assistance Office to Bosnia and Herzegovina (CAFAO-BiH) in obtaining the

original/genuine invoices and other documentation from the relevant foreign authorities, including Germany, Austria and Slovenia, which were then compared to the invoices presented by GIPI for Customs clearance.

I would just like to give you the HR's reaction to this, and I quote: "Whether or not crimes have been committed in this case is now a matter for the courts. Those charged are innocent until proven guilty. That is a basic principle of a modern, independent legal system. But what this case shows is that the tools for fighting crime and high-level corruption are now beginning to work. There is still a long way to go, and much more needs to be done to strengthen BiH's capacity to tackle these scourges. But I would like to congratulate CAFAO and the BiH authorities for their work in bringing this case to the courts."