

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

Constitutional and Legal Committee Can Support Fight Against Crime Tomorrow

The Constitutional and Legal Committee of the BiH House of Peoples will tomorrow be able to give the BiH House of Peoples the chance to consider amendments to key legislation which will ensure the effective and independent prosecution of individuals accused of war crimes, organised crime and economic crime in BiH.

The Constitutional and Legal Committee is reviewing amendments to the current Law on Court of BiH, the Law on the Prosecutors Office of BiH and the draft Law on Transfer of War Crimes Cases from the ICTY to the Court of BiH. These amendments would put a Registry system in place that will support the Court and Prosecutors Office of BiH. Registry systems have been adopted in Courts across the world, as a means of ensuring fair trials.

The Registry system supports the courts independence by, for example, ensuring that judges are selected for particular cases at random, assisting the Court to select qualified defence lawyers who will be available for defendants and appropriately compensated. The Registry also ensures that judicial resources are utilised as efficiently as possible – so avoiding unnecessary backlogs. The Court and Prosecutors Office of BiH will be responsible for some of BiH's most serious crimes; including War Crimes and Organized Crime Cases. The Registry will ensure that they have the required capacity to do so.

The proposed amendments are supported by BiH's most senior

Judicial Institutions including the Court of BiH, the BiH Prosecutors Office and the BiH Ministry of Justice. Should the Constitutional and Legal Committee fail to adopt the amendments proposed this would deny the BiH House of Peoples the opportunity to discuss these amendments. Not only would this weaken BiH's capacity to uphold the rule of law, it brings into question the fulfilment of BiH's international obligations with regard cooperation with the ICTY and it would also mean that BiH would not be ready for the first transfer of cases from the ICTY to the Court of BiH early in 2005. Not voting for these amendments is a vote for keeping war criminals out of jail and organised crime on our streets.

"Earlier today, the High Representative Paddy Ashdown and ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte discussed this issue at a meeting in The Hague . They underlined the importance of establishing a legal system that would enable the effective processing of war crimes through BiH's courts. "

Latest Economic Statistics

I have brought along copies of OHR's latest monthly economic report. As you know, this report brings together monthly figures that offer a snapshot of the BiH economy.

The report shows that the KM continues to enjoy investor confidence. From January to August 2004, the Central Bank sold a net total of KM 434.4 million. This means that the holders of Euro and other foreign currencies, on balance, exchanged more money into KM than the holders of KM exchanged into other currencies.

The report also notes that while BiH's Trade Figures do show a significant rise in exports year-on-year, the value of imports is still larger than exports and, that unemployment figures in the Federation remain stubbornly high.

I have brought along copies of this report with me, those of

you interested will also find this report on the OHR web page at www.ohr.int.