Press Conference following his Meeting with the NATO Secretary-General and his Address to the North Atlantic Council, NATO Headquarters, Brussels – 19 February 1997

CARL BILDT:
I am here in Brussels today for two reasons. First I have been briefing the NAC just now, and then we will have a meeting of the Steering Board during the afternoon. It has been, of course, primarily concerning the Brcko Arbitration award and the efforts now under way to start the implementation of it. The reaction of the parties has been cautiously positive, and that is encouraging, but we are going to face very significant challenges in the next few weeks in getting the resources that are going to be necessary, and getting the more detailed commitment by the parties that is going to be necessary. It is one thing to say in general terms that you are prepared to accept it but you also have to accept the details of it in a number of respects, and then of course we are going to face a year-long period of implementation in obviously one of the most contested parts of Bosnia. That is going to be fairly demanding. Now I can take your questions.
QUESTION: Are you not concerned that this delay in the arbitration of Brcko is going to exacerbate an already difficult situation?

CARL BILDT:
The idea is, of course, that it provides the opportunity to defuse the tension. Tension has been very high in this area, and this was one of the most fiercely contested parts during

the war. Indeed, if you look at the map, the town of Brcko is the key to the geo-strategic situation in a very large part of the former Yugoslavia, so any significant change here will have significant geo-strategic effects in a very large area; and that means that time and international effort could conceivably help in defusing the tension. But it is going to require time and it is going to require significant international efforts.

QUESTION:
Mr. Bildt, you will have two deputies, one for Mostar and the other for Brcko. Can you compare the role of your deputies, or the international community, in Mostar and in Brcko. What are the similarities and what are the differences, and why do you think, if Mostar didn't work, Brcko can work ?

CARL BILDT:
The Mostar office that we have is the OHR office for Southern Bosnia and Herzegovina and it is not only for Mostar. There is no specific Mostar operation of the Office of the High Representative. Mostar is the place where we have an office for Southern Bosnia, as we have an office in Banja Luka covering that part of Bosnia, as we have the rather rudimentary office in Tuzla covering the northern area. Brcko will be entirely different because that is a very large operation that is going to be set up for a very small area, it is rather tiny if you look at it on the map. So it is very difficult in terms of the commitment of resources and in terms of the powers in the mandate that will be there. That doesn't completely answer your second question – can it succeed? That is going to be dependent upon the co-operation of the parties. Will the parties co-operate ? I think it is significant that the Tribunal can return to the issue on March 15 next year. There is a significant danger of non-co-operation by one of the parties, in this particular case the Serb side, because of the risk of a transfer of territories which would disappear from them and go over to the Federation side. That could add

or act as rather powerful incentive for compliance. That incentive is not there in Mostar.

QUESTION:
Did you ask NATO to have more troops in Brcko and Mostar ?

CARL BILDT:
No I did not. In Mostar SFOR has been increasing its presence quite substantially, in West Mostar, during the last week. If you go there you do notice that SFOR does exist. That has had a calming effect no doubt on the situation there at the moment. In Brcko, we have had throughout this period in Brcko very good co-operation with the SFOR units that are there ,and it is at this moment the battalion of the US First Infantry Division that is there and we are working extremely closely with them.

QUESTION:
Mr Bildt do you have any comment on the postponement of the Donors Conference which was planned for March and now it is envisaged for April ?

CARL BILDT:
I wouldn't say it is a postponement because there have been a number of tentative dates circulated. It is very much dependent upon when the Bosnian parties themselves take the necessary decisions that lead up to an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, because when we have the agreement with the International Monetary Fund it is then possible for the World Bank and others to go forward with the Donors' Conference. The Brcko thing, the political turmoil, the anticipation placed around Brcko has of course been a diversion. That means that the process of dealing with the economic issues by the Bosnian parties themselves has slowed down somewhat during February. That always made the March dates highly dubious. I don't think that there was ever any real possibility of having it. So I think that the most likely tentative dates are in April. I wouldn't call it a

postponement.

QUESTION:
Mr. Bildt, in case you leave your post, some media speculates in April, some media in Spain is speculating as well with the possibility of Mr. Gonzalez taking over your post. Do you think Mr Gonzalez can do a good job as a High Representative?

CARL BILDT:
I have a very high respect for Mr. Gonzalez from previous positions that he has had. I don’t want to speculate about that in any sort of way because there have not been any discussions to that effect.

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