# Statement by the High Representative Valentin Inzko at the Press Conference in Sarajevo

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for coming this afternoon.

Before I move to my announcement I would like to make a number of observations because in many ways today's press conference has been a long time in coming because it relates to the arrest and extradition of Ratko Mladic to The Hague.

Mladic's arrest, sixteen years after he was first indicted has a special meaning for the families of the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica, the victims and survivors of ethnic cleansing, those who endured the siege of Sarajevo, and civilians in every town in Bosnia and Herzegovina targeted by Mladic.

Ratko Mladic will be presented with evidence against him and he will answer the accusations against him in court and justice will be served.

This is an important period for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina who want to see that justice is served and that those accused of committing the terrible war crimes and

genocide that have so deeply scarred this country, this region and this continent stand trial.

We have shown that we will not forget all those who lost their lives and who suffered during the war and that the crimes committed against them will not be allowed to go unpunished and that we continue to sympathise with their pain.

It is important to remind ourselves that individuals, and not the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are those who are directly responsible for the crimes that were committed.

For me and for the Office of the High Representative Mladic's arrest and extradition is a great satisfaction.

I take pride in the fact that we played a role in a broad and sustained effort to ensure that justice is done, that all those indicted by the ICTY for crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina stand trial in The Hague.

After sixteen years on the run, Ratko Mladic's appearance in the ICTY in The Hague marks the closing chapter in the 15 year efforts of my Office to ensure that the obligation under Dayton to cooperate with the ICTY is met in full.

I want to pay special praise to one of my predecessors Lord Ashdown, who during his mandate had to tackle the very serious degree of non cooperation with the ICTY that prevailed at the time and that held the country hostage.

As you are aware, the High Representative has engaged in a variety of ways to ensure that persons indicted for war crimes face justice, be it before the ICTY or before domestic courts, including the State Court, which I fully support.

One form of action undertaken by my predecessors has been the removal of officials suspected of actively supporting those evading justice and other forms of non-cooperation with the ICTY.

With Ratko Mladic now finally appearing before the ICTY in The Hague, the condition has been met for the bans on all officials who have been removed by the High Representative in relation to non-co-operation with the ICTY to be lifted

As a result, I have decided today to lift the bans on 58 individuals affected.

In the same way, I have lifted orders blocking the accounts of 34 individuals that were suspected to materially support to persons indicted for war crimes.

I have also passed a decision today ending the requirement of the SDS to provide monthly financial reports to my Office.

But, let me make it very clear that the lifting of these decisions in no way affects previous, ongoing or future criminal proceedings against the individuals in question and that lifting these decisions in no way represents an endorsement of any of the individuals concerned to return to the political arena nor does it entitle those individuals to return to the position from which they were removed, nor does not create any obligation for their former employers. Whether those individuals become active again in some other public function is a matter that will be determined by political parties, the institutions and the wider public. This is a test of the maturity of Bosnia and Herzegovina's political establishment and I know for a fact that many in Europe and beyond will be watching closely to see whether officials in BiH and the RS choose the future or the past.

Some will be disappointed with this decision, and the fact that certain individuals can now return to the political arena. Others will question the justification for the decisions.

On my part, I consider this to be a victory for the consistent application of conditionality, and a confirmation that the international community is right to insist on full cooperation

with the ICTY. Now this has been achieved with regard to ICTY related to Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is right that the bans that were put in place are lifted.

Finally, today is a day to remind ourselves of how far Bosnia and Herzegovina has come during the last fifteen years and to recommit ourselves to ensuring that all those responsible for war crimes are prosecuted and face justice before the courts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As High Representative I will continue to support domestic efforts to achieve this in the shortest period of time possible.