Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

Reckless Election Rhetoric Can Have Negative Impact

The High Representative/EU Special Representative, as you may know, is in Brussels today. At three o'clock this afternoon he will brief the Political and Security Committee of the European Council, the body which is directly responsible for the EU Special Representative's engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dr Schwarz-Schilling will brief the PSC on current political developments and on the prospects for BiH's transition to closer Euro-Atlantic integration and the transition from OHR to a fully operational EUSR.

The HR/EUSR will discuss among other things the negative impact of reckless election rhetoric and obstruction of reforms on this twin transition

You will recall that last Friday the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council expressed concern at recent cases of inflammatory rhetoric used during the election campaign. The Council reaffirmed its unequivocal commitment to the Dayton-Paris Peace Agreement and the territorial integrity of

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It also expressed regret that many key reforms had been delayed, and expressed particular concern over the lack of progress towards the implementation of the October 2005 agreement on police restructuring.

What should be very clear from this is that everything that is said by party leaders during the election campaign has an impact well beyond Bosnia and Herzegovina – and some of that impact is negative, in terms of securing closer Euro-Atlantic integration and visa-free travel among other things.

In his remarks to the PSC this afternoon the HR/EUSR will focus on future possibilities as well as present difficulties, alluding to the huge potential of a strengthened EU Special Representative's Office to promote economic development, education reform and good governance, and renewing his call for progress on visa facilitation (which he describes as an important indication for the people of the Western Balkans that they are systematically moving closer to Europe). In this last respect he will welcome the EU Presidency's current effort to ensure that everything necessary has been done so that mandates for the negotiation of visa facilitation and readmission can be adopted by the end of this year.

Foreign Currency Law Amendments Would Hurt Depositors

The BiH House of Representatives on Monday adopted amendments to the Foreign Currency Law proposed by SPRS delegate Tihomir Gligoric.

The Foreign Currency Law in its original form provides for the fairest settlement that is possible under Bosnia and Herzegovina 's current financial circumstances. Under the terms of the original law more than 70 percent of all account holders will be paid in full by the end of 2007, and the remaining claims will be settled within 13 years.

Instead of improving on this, the amendments passed yesterday would effectively sabotage this settlement, damage the country's economic prospects and undermine its financial standing.

The main objections to the amendments are that

- They would overwhelm the State and Entity budgets (significantly, the supporters of the amendments have failed to explain in detail how they propose to pay for them)
- in all likelihood they would mean that the Entities could not pay pensions or social contributions (unless taxes were increased)
- they would burden BiH with debts the country can ill afford and threaten fiscal sustainability; and
- they would call into question the rating upgrade BiH recently received, a major boost in the effort to attract investment and create jobs.

In other words, these amendments would not result in full and timely payment to foreign currency deposit holders, since the financial standing of the authorities would be compromised. Instead, they would damage the interests of frozen foreign currency holders and the interests of the people of BiH.

The OHR, the World Bank, the IMF, and the European Commission call on the BiH House of Peoples to consider seriously all aspects of the proposed amendments – and not to sacrifice the long-term interests of deposit holders and citizens for the sake of empty election rhetoric.

OSCE

Conference on Education of National Minorities in BiH to be held in Sarajevo tomorrow

The OSCE Mission to BiH, in cooperation with the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities Hague, is hosting a one-day conference on Education of National Minorities in BiH, in Sarajevo tomorrow.

The purpose of the conference is to promote the development of systemic solutions for the education of national minorities, to inform the public about best practices in ensuring the educational right of national minorities and to draw attention to the role of national minorities in BiH as full citizens of the country.

Ambassador Douglas Davidson, Head of OSCE Mission to BiH, will give opening remarks, followed by Tim Cartwright, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in BiH, Annelies Verstichel, representative of the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities Hague and representatives of NGOs dealing with education of Roma and associations of national minorities of Slovenians and Ukrainians in BiH.

The press conference will take place from 13:15 to 13:45 at E-net Centre of Faculty of Economics Sarajevo, Trg oslobodjenja 1.

United Kingdom 'Beacon' Delegation in visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina

A 'Beacon' delegation from the United Kingdom is making a five-day visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina . This week it will visit six BiH's Beacon municipalities: Tuzla , Zenica, Prnjavor, Srebrenik, Istocno Novo Sarajevo and Sekovici.

The BiH Beacon Scheme is designed to raise standards in municipal governance by recognizing and rewarding municipalities that can demonstrate excellence and innovation.

UK ‘Beacon’ delegation is on a return visit to BiH. Representatives of BiH ‘Beacon’ municipalities visited the UK in June this year where they had an opportunity to learn about their British municipalities and to exchange experiences.

The main press conference will be held on Thursday, 21 September, at 10:40, UNITIC building, conference room number 8, in Sarajevo. Photo opportunity, opening of the conference will take place at 11:00, UNITIC amphitheatre.

ICTY

Good morning on behalf of the Tribunal. I have two items today.

First, I would like to thank the BiH Union of Former Camp Detainees and the Croatian Association of Camp Detainees for inviting me to speak at the excellent conference “Reparations for War Victims”, which they organised last weekend in Sarajevo with the support of the ICMP.

The criminal prosecution of war crimes, be it done in The Hague or before national courts, is extremely important, but it is only one form of justice, and by definition it focuses on the perpetrators. Therefore it is important that events like this are organised to highlight the needs and rights of victims.

I hope that last weekend’s conference will stimulate all relevant domestic and international actors to work towards the realisation of the victims’ right to reparations, as provided by international law.

Second, you may already have heard that the Government of Croatia yesterday filed an official request to the Trial Chamber in the case of Prlić et al. asking for leave to appear as *amicus curiae* in that case. I have for you copies of that

request. Similar requests were filed by Croatia in the cases of Gotovina, Čermak and Markač.

Perhaps just a short reminder of what "amicus curiae" means: Rule 74 of the ICTY's Rules of Procedure and Evidence stipulates that *"A Chamber may, if it considers it desirable for the proper determination of the case, invite or grant leave to a State, organization or person to appear before it and make submissions on any issue specified by the Chamber"*.

That is all from me today, thank you for your attention.

EUFOR

No statement.