

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

Slap in the face to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina

It is now three weeks since the High Representative urged members of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly to use the time before the October elections to show voters they can deliver reforms that will help create jobs and improve living conditions.

Parliament has failed to meet since the High Representative's speech.

This failure – in a country where essential services are stretched or non-existent, where the condition of roads and houses and schools are appalling, and where whole families have to survive on 300 marks a month – is nothing short of a slap in the face to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The inescapable conclusion which many voters will draw from Parliament's inaction is that parliamentarians do not care.

"Parliament is the highest decision making body in a democracy," the High Representative said today. "If Parliament stops working, democracy stops functioning.

"Parliamentarians should never cavalierly deprive citizens of their democratic right. I expect all those responsible for the

present state of affairs – party leaders, parliamentary managers, and delegates – to take note,” the High representative said today.

The High Representative noted that the hubris of parliamentarians has jeopardised the prospect of enacting the Higher Education Law, which will harmonise standards for courses and exams across all the universities in BiH and give students from this country real possibilities of completing part of their studies at universities in other parts of Europe.

It has also placed in jeopardy the prospect of enacting the Law on Obligations, which will modernise the commercial code and thus encourage investment and help create jobs; the Pharmaceuticals Law, which will create the conditions in which medicines available in BiH can be properly inspected for quality and competitively priced; and the Salary Law, which will harmonise the pay of civil servants to keep it within limits that the country can afford. It will also jeopardise amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code, which will strengthen the judiciary and ensure that the successful transfer of cases from the ICTY can continue.

High Representative meets German Minister of Interior

The High Representative is to meet with the German Minister for the Interior Dr. Wolfgang Schaeuble this morning and Christoph Heusgen, foreign policy adviser to Chancellor Angela Merkel this afternoon.

On the second day of a two-day visit to Germany , the High Representative will highlight the progress that BiH has made in reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law. He will also argue that the European Union needs to relax visa requirements for specific target groups in BiH, including businesspeople, students and scientists.

We will have more details from these meetings later today.

SDHR to attend Kid's Festival Workshop

The Senior Deputy High Representative, Peter Bas-Backer, will attend the Third Kids' Festival in Sarajevo today and participate in a "Meet the VIP" workshop. Ambassador Bas-Backer will take questions from young people, aged between 12 and 18, on issues such as education reform, employment prospects, the mandate and role of the OHR, and the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Media are kindly invited to cover this workshop, which will begin on Tuesday, 13 June 2006 at 15.00 in Skenderija, Western Foyer, Third Workshop.

EUFOR

No statement.