Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

OHR Calls on FBiH Parliamentarians to Adopt the Law on RT FBiH

OHR calls upon the Federation of BiH Parliament to adopt the Law on RT FBiH, fully harmonized with the PBS System Law. This issue is scheduled to be discussed by both Housesthis week. OHR reminds the Federation parliamentariansthat the BiH Parliament has already put in place a framework State Law on Public Broadcasting System and a harmonized State Law on Public Brodcasting Service, BHRT.

The FBiH Parliament must show leadership in this issue, and make it clearthat the Government version of the draft law, with its wording on the founder concept,is in contradiction with the State Framework Law, is unacceptable. We very much hope that the Parliament will delete this clause. If they do not, FBiH authorities are putting at risk two things – the PBS reform as such and the fulfillment of animportant precondition forBiH inthe SAA process

The Federation authorities and the authorities of Republika Srpska are already two months late in fulfilling this harmonization requirement.

House of Representatives' Amendments on Minor Offences Must Be Rejected

The Principal Deputy High Representative, Larry Butler, called on the FBiH House of Peoples (HoP) to support legislation at their session tomorrow that will modernize the way in which BiH deals with minor offences.

"Reforming the minor offence courts is a key element in consolidating the Rule of Law in BiH," Ambassador Butler said. Asking the FBiH taxpayer to maintain 71 minor offence courts as a separate structure to the existing court system is unacceptable." Ambassador Butler noted that, "some of these courts barely have enough cases to keep their employees occupied, and yet the court system throughout the FBiH desperately needs investment in infrastructure and technology that will speed up the application of justice."

Ambassador Butler emphasized that the Law on Courts originally proposed by the FBiH Government was absolutely sound. It located the Minor Offence Courts with the regular courts, which meant savings could be used to improve the court system as a whole. However, last week the FBiH House of Representatives (HoR) altered the Government's version. The version adopted by the HoR doesn't create the savings envisaged in the FBiH Government's version. It is therefore crucial that the House of Peoples accepts the Government's version – that way, through harmonization, taxpayers' money can still be saved.

At their session last week the FBiH HoR also adopted several amendments the draft Law on Minor Offences that, as well as maintaining a separate minor offence structure, introduce imprisonment as a sanction for a minor offence – though this is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights – and that make court procedures longer and more complex. "These amendments have to be rejected if this reform is to succeed," Ambassador Butler said.

SDHR in Banja Luka

The SDHR, Peter Bas-Backer, will pay his first, two-day official visit to Banja Luka tomorrow, 8 March. During his visit, Ambassador Bas-Backer will meet with members of the newly appointed RS Government and other RS officials. Media details will follow during the day today.

OSCE

No statement.

EUPM

BG Coppola commends recent action of SBS Trebinje

Brigadier General VincenzoCoppola would like to commend the State Border Service for professional police work, good management of the case and good cooperation between all involved agencies, in a recent action conducted to fight drugs smuggling in the area of Trebinje.

On 2 March, EUPM monitored the action and the investigation conducted in the case of attempted drugs smuggling across BiH borders. EUPM report concluded that it was conducted properly by the local SBS members. “The two SBS officers who were injured in this operation should be highly commended for putting their lives at risk for the sake of protection of BiH borders and its citizens”, said BG Coppola.

SBS is a crucial tool in fight against drugs smuggling and other types of organized crime. In this particular case, EUPM would like to note the professional and efficient cooperation between the BiH law enforcement agencies and the Ministry of

Interior of Republic of Monte Negro . This example clearly shows that an even better cooperation between the police in BiH and other similar investigative units throughout Europe is crucial if BiH wants to curb organized crime efficiently, as we are all aware of the fact that the crime is never limited to the borders of one country.

EUFOR

No statement.

RTQs:

Zumra Arnautović, TV Hayat:

One question for the OHR. Did you ever recieve the information you requested about the officers of the Republica Srpska Army who helped Mladić – this question refers to the officers who were stationed in the military compound in Han Pijesak at the time?

Office of the High Representative:

The only thing I can recall at this moment is that we last mentioned Mladić sometime, I think, in December 2004 when we used the fact that even after he was indicted for war crimes he still recieved his pension payments as evidence that it is necessary to carry out reforms in the security sector. However, I am not sure exactly which report you are referring to and basing your question on, so it would be best if I get back to you later during the day after I check this information.