

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

OHR, Kevin Sullivan

OSCE, Mersiha Causevic-Podzic

EUFOR, Jem Thomas

OHR

SAA Depends on Maintaining Cross-Party Cooperation

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is in Brussels today. He has just concluded a meeting with EC Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, and he is now meeting EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana. The purpose of these meetings is to review the progress that BiH is now making in regard to the Stabilisation and Association process.

"It is now absolutely imperative that BiH approach the SAA negotiations with seriousness," the High Representative said in Brussels this morning, ahead of his meetings. "Progress in finalising the PBS legislation and meeting the deadlines BiH's Parliaments have themselves set on Police Reform will be the first test that the EU will apply."

In its Decision yesterday accepting the Commission's recommendation that SAA negotiations begin, the EU Council called for implementation of the Police Reform agreement and stressed the importance of the adoption and implementation of all necessary public broadcasting legislation.

"As BiH enters the SAP the responsibility of the BiH Authorities is immediately increased," the High Representative

said. "Every single citizen can benefit from the possibilities opened up by the launch of SAA negotiations. The political leadership must make sure that benefits are optimized and delivered as soon as possible."

The High Representative emphasised that the arduous process of administrative and legislative reform that has brought BiH to this position has been driven by cross-party cooperation and pragmatic compromise and that this must now be maintained. SAA will only move forward in a satisfactory way if the process is not subjected to party political infighting.

In light of yesterday's Foreign Ministers' announcement the High Representative has extended his congratulations to the Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Adnan Terzic, the Director of the Directorate for European Integration, Osman Topcagic, and other leaders in BiH.

Later today we will be distributing photos from the Rehn and Solana meetings.

SDHR visits Tuzla

The Senior Deputy High Representative, Martin Ney, is making a two-day visit to Tuzla and Orasje tomorrow and Thursday.

Tomorrow Ambassador Ney will meet cantonal and municipal officials in Tuzla to discuss regional economic development and reforms connected to BiH's Euro-Atlantic integration effort. He will also meet academics and representatives of civic society.

On Thursday, Ambassador Ney will visit the ICMP ID Centre in Tuzla and then travel to Orasje and Draganovci, where he will meet municipal officials and local families and discuss, among other things, return issues.

We will be distributing a media advisory later today with full

details of media opportunities on this trip.

OSCE

Eighth Education Forum starts in Mostar today

Over 400 citizens throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina will engage in discussions about their country's education situation in four separate forums, organized by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina , to be held in Mostar, Tuzla , Banja Luka and Sarajevo this week. The first forum starts today in Mostar.

Since 2002, education forums have provided parents, teachers, school directors, media and elected officials the opportunity to discuss issues and to shape the development of the education reform. This Eighth Education Forum aims to encourage citizens to take a more active engagement in education reform by identifying issues and then formulating and lobbying for solutions themselves, while at the same time working with their elected officials to make reform happen.

The Eighth Education Forum, "Better Education – It's Your Right. It's Your Responsibility", is an opportunity to discuss the progress made hitherto in education. It will not only look at its successes but examine its failings in the spirit of "lessons learned," and thereby contributing towards more positive progress in education reform and its implementation.

The OSCE Mission to BiH recently conducted the public opinion research raising the question of education. Only 23% of parents are completely satisfied with the education their children receive. It is also worth noting that 83% think that personal connections is very important in finding a job, while only 58% that education is very important.

Eight Education Forum moves to Tuzla tomorrow, 9 November;

Banja Luka on 10 November and closes in Sarajevo on 11 November 2005.

EUFOR

Border Control Operations

As of yesterday morning, BiH law enforcement authorities started to conduct border control operations across a wide area, in order to deter all types of illegal activities along BiH borders. In direct support of these operations, EUFOR, in cooperation with EUPM, is conducting wide, coordinated and simultaneous activities across the EUFOR area of operations.

In support of the State Border Service (SBS), who are leading these operations, this wide-reaching operation involves rapid and intense deployments of EUFOR troops, providing flexible response to intelligence gathered from EUFOR assets and that provided by local law enforcement agencies.

Cooperation so far between BiH government and local authorities and EUFOR has been very effective.

EUFOR regrets any inconvenience to law-abiding citizens who may be caught up in the consequences of vehicle check points and other surveillance operations, all of which are contributing to a safer BiH.

In connection with this, it can be confirmed that the troops injured in a traffic accident near Zvornik yesterday morning, were part of the support elements for these border operations. None of the injuries to the seven Polish soldiers were life threatening, although the driver did suffer injuries to his legs, chest and face, injuries which are not considered critical. After first aid on the scene, he was transferred to the military hospital at Rajlovac by helicopter, whereas the others returned to Camp Eagle Base in Tuzla for treatment of

more minor injuries.

An investigation into the cause of the accident is ongoing.