

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

Delaying tactics in police reform will only dash BiH's hopes of accession to the EU

The RSNA is meeting today to vote on the agreement on police reform. Time has all but run out. If today delegates fail to vote in favour of an agreement on police reform that meets the EU's three principles the chances of BiH signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU by the end of the year will have disappeared.

The EU has consistently re-iterated the three principles according to which the BiH authorities are expected to reach an agreement on police reform. Namely: securing the exclusive state-level competences on police, the elimination of political interference from police and ensuring that police regions are determined on the basis of technical and professional criteria.

These principles are crystal clear. They will not change. Delaying tactics will only dash BiH's hopes of accession to the EU, and another chance may not appear before 2007.

Last week, Commissioner Olli Rehn has said that the proposal

prepared by the BiH State-level authorities would meet these three principles. The RS Government proposal does not. Commissioner Rehn also reminded RS politicians that police reform is not a threat to the future of the Entities, which are guaranteed under Dayton . And steps have been taken to address legitimate concerns voiced by RS politicians during negotiations.

This is the last major reform that is necessary in order to start the SAA process. Opinion surveys show that more than 80 per cent of BiH's citizens want to join the EU. They are expecting their political representatives to deliver this. At a time when many EU citizens are questioning the merits of further enlargement, failure to endorse an agreement on police restructuring that meets the EU's three principles would send an extremely negative signal.

OSCE

Going back to school

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina extends its best wishes to the children of BiH as they return to the start of another school year.

We also take this opportunity to remind everyone about education reform.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is home to Serbs, Bosniacs and Croats and others, including national minorities. Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, nearly 10 years ago, the OSCE Mission, along with its international community partners have been working to make that home a viable and prosperous place with equal opportunities for all.

Education reform is part of that vision, that we trusted was shared by the framers of the Education Reform Strategy presented to the Peace Implementation Council in November

2002. In it Bosnia and Herzegovina 's education ministers declared that their country's "last and best chance for a viable future hinges on its young people." And as a result, called for "taking politics out of the classroom, where it has no place."

Given the monumental challenges facing BiH today, it is important that BiH's authorities not lose sight of this.

Education reform is about every child, in every classroom throughout this country. It is meant to protect individual rights, so, for example, that a Croat child in Banja Luka is respected as much as a Serb child in Mostar or a Bosniac child in Brcko.

Education reform is not an attempt to deprive anyone of his or her national, ethnic, religious or cultural identity. Contrary, it is meant to protect that right and guarantee that each person is respected.

If, as BiH officials claim, they would like to see an education system that truly benefits the children of this country, we hope that they move forward in away that puts the interests of children first.

EUPM

No statement.

EUFOR

There has been some interest about a joint EUPM and local Police operation in Sarajevo over the past two days. This operation is similar to others conducted in BiH and was designed to support local police in their efforts to disrupt and deter criminal activities. It was conducted in specific

areas in and around Sarajevo .

There has been some confusion in the media about the powers or mandate under which EUFOR can carry out such operations. Such authority was confirmed by UN Resolution 1575 and Dayton following the transfer of mandate from SFOR to EUFOR.

NATO

No statement.

RTQs:

Antonio Prlenda, Oslobodjenje:

Just to make it clear. The confusion, as you said, about the mandate. You said to me yesterday, that it is according to legal framework agreement that you conduct your day to day operations, and it has been said to me that it's not open to public. Can you confirm that, and why it's not possible to get it, obtain it and quote it?

EUFOR, Tim Smith:

I think that was a misunderstanding. You spoke to Tom yesterday, I believe, and that was a misunderstanding between he and you. And that's why I wanted to clarify that this morning – that a mandate and powers are the same thing. Information is clearly available on the web site. I can give you the web site address afterwards, the actual address. But, I say, this is actually open source information, so apologies for the misunderstanding yesterday.

Antonio Prlenda, Oslobodjenje:

But, also it is strange that when you conduct operations on a daily basis, it is quite strange that your spokesperson have

to search it for a whole day. I don't refer to the spokesperson, I refer to the system in your headquarters which is probably maybe sometimes too complicated even for you guys, that you deal with the media. So, take care about this. It would be wonderful for us, for all of us.

EUFOR, Tim Smith:

I take your point. Yes.

Fedzad Forto, FENA:

A question mainly for OSCE, but I would also like to get a comment from the OHR. Considering that it was announced that the two schools under the same roof should be closed at the beginning of the new school year, we now see that in Prozor, Stolac, we even have information from Busovača and Bugojno, that a step backwards has been taken – that separate schools for Bosniac and Croat children are being formed. The Municipality Board of Prozor has taken a decision to legalize the existence of two separate schools, one for Bosniacs and one for Croats. Will you take any concrete action to stop this?

OSCE, Elmira Bayrasli:

I think we've been very clear on this situation with two schools under one roof. It's long overdue. The authorities need to implement the decision on administrative and legal unification. It goes against the very spirit of the framework law and all the other commitments that Bosnia and Herzegovina signed up to. I have nothing more to add to that.