

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

High Representative Addresses FBiH Political Clubs

The High Representative will later today meet with politicians representing the FBiH political party clubs. Their discussions will focus on Police reform and in particular the crucial upcoming negotiations to be held on Vlasica between the 24th and 27th April.

The EC's Consultative Task Force is due to be in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 19th May to assess progress on the Feasibility Study Requirements. BiH's leaders must now reach a formal agreement on police reform, or be responsible for the delay in BiH's EU accession ambitions.

Based on the EU's three principles that require (1) all legislative and budgetary competencies be vested at state-level (2) policing is carried out in functional areas, so as to achieve technically efficient policing and (3) to remove political interference in operational policing, these negotiations could provide BiH with a decent system of policing, one which can win the battle against crime, rather than losing it.

With the EC acknowledgement that Serbia and Montenegro completed their Feasibility study last week it is clear that the priority for BiH's neighbours is EU membership, not the destructive politics and alliances of the past. BiH's leading political cadre – in both Government and opposition – now have the opportunity to prove to BiH's citizens that they too are intent on this goal and that they are capable of leading BiH into Europe.

PDHR Larry Butler to visit Banja Luka, discuss fiscal reform & police reform

PDHR Larry Butler is in Banja Luka today, where he will meet RS Prime Minister Pero Bukejlovic, RS Finance Minister Svetlana Cenic, RSNA Speaker Dusan Stojicic, SNSD leader Milorad Dodik and RS President Dragan Cavic.

Talks will cover steps currently underway to ensure that BiH moves forward with the EU accession process. Among the required steps are furnishing the BiH Council of Ministers with the ministries, departments and institutional capability it needs in order to negotiate a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. Currently, BiH's painfully scarce resources are being wasted by duplicating services and functions at Entity, State and every level. PDHR Butler will discuss the need for the Fiscal Sustainability Working Group, appointed by the three Finance Ministers in February, to move forward with its task of identifying ways in which the bureaucracy can be rationalized and made to serve BiH citizens more efficiently.

Ambassador Butler will also be speaking to RS politicians about the negotiations on police reform, based on the Police Reform Commission report. As you know, the High Representative has begun a process that will bring together the parties that can secure parliamentary majority for police restructuring.

The European Commission has clearly laid out the parameters for a modernized police service in BiH which would allow BiH to move forward with the Stabilisation and Association process. EC conditions are that all legislative and budgetary competencies must be vested at the state level; police services must be based on geographical regions drawn up to ensure maximum efficiency; and political interference in policing in BiH must be eliminated.

The PIC Steering Board on 7 April underlined that these negotiations are about the structure of policing, not about BiH's constitutional make-up. The aim is to provide a decent system of policing in BiH, that can win the battle against crime.

Last night, Ambassador Butler addressed a meeting of mayors in Brcko, where he called on municipal leaders to become involved in the countrywide debate over political and economic reform. He noted that municipal issues are national issues and national issues are municipal issues, because reforms at the state level affect the municipalities and can only be implemented efficiently through the municipalities. You can find copies of this speech on the OHR website.

OSCE

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of Bosnia and Herzegovina's international obligations as well as the current education structure and competencies, OSCE Mission to BiH has produced the report **"Raising Debate: Is BiH Respecting Its International Commitments in the Field of Education – Questions for the Citizens of BiH"**. The report looks at how these obligations are being implemented across BiH, and promotes goals ensuring that all children have access to quality education and respect for the rights of all children.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has signed many international treaties on education which oblige the state to implement specific education standards in the country. These treaties generally promote the same principles: access, availability, acceptability, effectiveness and official recognition, non-discrimination, absence of segregation in education and the obligation to maintain and continue reform.

This report consists of three sections: "BiH's international commitments in the field of education"; "BiH constitutional structure in the field of education"; and "Does the current education system in BiH respects international obligations?"

As BiH's focus moves from the short-term goals set out in the Education Reform Strategy to longer-term solutions, which can ensure its education system functions to the benefit of all citizens, now is the appropriate and, in fact, the essential time to review BiH's current progress towards implementing its international obligations in the field of education.

A recent review of the Education Reform Strategy by the international community points to some of the progress made, and highlights that standards of quality and access set out in the strategy have not been systematically applied across the country and that local authorities have still not assumed sufficient ownership of the reform process.

With 13 Ministries of Education in BiH, for an estimated population of 3.8 million people, the system remains extremely fragmented. While the state-level Ministry of Civil Affairs commits BiH as a state to international obligations such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the state ministry does not have the capacity to ensure these obligations are met or to effectively coordinate education initiatives and ensure harmony among disparate education initiatives across the country.

This report does not purport to prescribe particular solutions

or even make recommendations as to how the authorities and citizens of BiH must address these problems. Rather it seeks to pose some of the questions necessary as a first step towards formulating those solutions, which must be discussed, debated and ultimately agreed upon by local authorities, education experts, school directors, parents, students and other concerned citizens of BiH.

The OSCE anticipates that this report will help to raise debate across BiH about education reform progress and the effectiveness of education structures.

EUPM

Commissioner Carty talks to Brcko officials about police restructuring

The key principles of the police restructuring, as one of the EU requirements towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, will be the main topic of the discussions that the Head of the European Union Police Mission, Commissioner Kevin Carty, will hold during his official visit to Brcko District today (19 April).

Commissioner Carty will first meet with the Chief of Brcko police, and later during the day, with the Mayor of Brcko.

The Commissioner will use this opportunity to stress the importance of police restructuring and the impact that this process will have on the future of this country and its citizens. He will also reiterate the main aim of the reform process being about creating professional police service, accountable to the citizens and effective in fighting crime.

EUPM and OHR's road shows to continue

The European Union Police Mission (EUPM) and the Office of the High Representative have been organizing public meetings throughout BiH in order to explain the main purpose and

benefits of the police reform to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina .

This weeks public meetings will be held on 19 April in Derventa, beginning at 18.00 hrs in the RS Army Club; 20 April in Banja Luka, at 18.00 hrs in Banski Dvor small conference room and finally on 21 April in Brcko, starting at 18.00 hrs in Cultural Centre.

During the last two months EUPM and OHR staff travelled to 25 different locations in the RS and Federation BiH, and held over 50 meeting where they spoke to the citizens, the police and other stakeholders about police restructuring process. It was explained that police reform was solely about creating a professional police service, accountable to the citizens and effective in fighting crime.

EUFOR

No statement.

NATO

No statement.

RTQs

Journalist:

NATO HQ Sarajevo Commander stated yesterday that there are indications that events in the RS Barracks were staged. Have you found any proof so far? Do you have any information on the Report of RS Minister of Defence? Is it ready, because he has to deliver it by tomorrow?

NATO:

As you know from yesterday's press conference, a report is being compiled. It will be given to us tomorrow (on the events of Saturday). We have not received that report yet. I don't think it would be wise to comment on the facts of the case until we have results of the investigation that is carried out by the competent military authorities.