

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

OHR, Kevin Sullivan

OSCE, Zinaida Delic

EUPM, Alun Roberts

OHR

Today and for the rest of this week the High Representative will be taking part in a series of radio discussion programmes on the subject of police reform. The High Representative will be seeking to clarify the debate about police reform. It's important everyone understands what the issues are – and what they are not.

Police restructuring is about removing politics from policing. And it's about making the police more efficient. This can only be achieved by removing the things that prevent the police from doing their jobs – such as:

- inadequate funding,
- irrational organization, and
- political interference.

Successful police reform will also have a positive impact on a variety of related areas. The European Commission has said that establishing an efficient, and democratic police system at the state level is a pre-requisite for further progress towards eventual EU accession.

Without police restructuring there also cannot be any change in the EU's visa requirements for BiH citizens.

In relation to this, we have just learned that the FBiH House

of Representatives has failed to pass the Law on Police Officials, which had been agreed by the Federation Interior Minister, the Federation Police Director, the EUPM and the OHR and is in line with the EC's principles for police reform.

This law is a major component of efforts to improve policing in this country, and the OHR urges parliamentarians to overcome current obstacles and secure its speedy enactment.

The whole issue, with regard to this particular law and with regard to police reform in general is very simple.

Take the politics out of policing. Make policing professional. Give Police harmonized working relations, i.e ranks, salaries, promotions, and conditions to improve career opportunities. Make BiH a safer place to live. Add a key element to BiH's EU accession process.

OSCE

Ambassador Davidson attends seminar on Inter-State Judicial Co-operation in War Crimes Proceedings in Stockholm

Ambassador Douglas Davidson, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina , is attending a seminar on Inter-State Judicial Co-operation in War Crimes that is taking place today in Stockholm . The seminar, hosted by The Folke Bernadotte Academy together with the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, continues the discussions initiated at the OSCE-facilitated expert meeting on inter-state cooperation in war crimes proceedings in Palic, Serbia and Montenegro, in November last year. In addition to the OSCE, among the invited guests are judges, prosecutors and government representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina , Croatia , and Serbia and Montenegro .

The discussion will focus on identifying obstacles and finding

tangible solutions to the development and implementation of effective cross-border judicial cooperation for prosecution of war crimes. The participants will also discuss transfer of trials to local courts, domestically initiated war crime trials and domestic jurisdiction issues in relation to international norms for fair trials and due process.

Ambassador Davidson will use this opportunity to remind all the participants of the importance of the work done by the District and Cantonal Courts in BiH in the prosecution of war crimes, and that the Entity Courts have also been integral part of the regional cooperation.

On-line Interview with Ambassador Davidson

The OSCE Mission to BiH will host an on-line interview with Ambassador Douglas Davidson, Head of Mission, on 24th February between 1600 – 1700 hrs.

Ambassador Davidson will be available to answer questions from BiH citizens on a wide range of issues that pertain to the OSCE's work in this country. All those interested can log on www.oscebih.org to ask about the status of education reform; how students can get involved; how municipal administration can function better; how citizens can influence the decision making process, or to offer a comment or a suggestion.

Please note that in addition to this hour, for all those who will not be able to be on-line at the specific time, we will open the site so they can submit their questions any time between 0900 until 1700 hrs on 24th February 2005.

EUPM

(check against delivery)

In reference to the Campaign in support of a single structure

of policing, EUPM is satisfied with the launch of its public information campaign, following the presentation of the campaign materials by Commissioner Carty at the press conference on 15 February.

EUPM is also satisfied with the reporting and follow up coverage of the Commissioner's press interview on Friday. This focussed on several key reasons of why a single structure of policing is necessary. The Commissioner's remarks on the effect of a single structure going a long way toward removing political influence and political interference in the work of the police – which in EUPM's is an essential requirement for a democratic and professional police service in BiH – were also covered widely by several other media.

Separate media reports over the weekend on comments and assessments of the need for restructuring by other forms of opinion, served to begin widening the process of information to the public on the issues and benefits involved.

In the coming weeks EUPM will continue to contribute to various forms of public information messages on the need for police restructuring in BiH. Although the public information in support of a single structure of policing is in its early stages, what we feel is beginning to happen is an initial awareness of the public of the issues involved. EUPM is of the view that as this matter is so important for the future of BiH, that the campaign that is underway will stimulate debate and discussion where it really is important – amongst the citizens and public of BiH.

OHR:

Are there any questions?

Fedja Forto, Fena Agency:

One. One question. OHR explicitly, at the last briefing, declared themselves against this Law on the Privileges of Parliamentary Representatives. Will you insist upon that issue because, as I understand, in parliament they are only attempting to reformulate the law proposals with regards to the previous ones?

Kevin Sullivan, OHR:

Well, the statement that was made by the OHR was very clear and I think, relatively simple, and that is at a time when you have poverty rates as high as they are in Bosnia and Herzegovina, any elected official has to look at the appropriateness of raising salaries. What the OHR will do in response to the latest changes, I won't speculate on, but the essential matter and the essential position of the OHR remains the same, and I think it's the position of many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that is that once the economy has been put on a full recovery path and once standards of living are across the board beginning to rise, then is the time to start talking about raising parliamentary salaries, but not before then.