Transcript of the International Agency's Joint Press Conference at CPIC

Subject: **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 28 January 2003**

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 28 January 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Kevin Sullivan	• High Representative to Brief CoE on BiH's Reform Progress • Meeting of the PIC Steering Board • Bulldozer Initiative Meeting in Mostar
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• OSCE to attend Peace Implementation Council meeting in Brussels • Regional conference in Sarajevo on Roma refugees and Displaced Persons
c. EUPM	Jon Oskar Solnes	• Srebrenica Incident • DPHoM in Srebrenica • Human Trafficking in Canton 7
d. SFOR	Major Shawn Mell	• Update to the detention of Mr. Fijuljanin • 39th meeting of the Joint Military Commission

2. Twenty Nine members of the media including four television crews attended the conference.

3. The transcript of the questions and answers is attached.

A. Ollivier
Col. (FR A),
Chief Operations and Plans

Kevin Sullivan – OHR

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will address the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg this afternoon. He will report on Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in fulfilling the post-accession criteria set out by the CoE when BiH became the organisation's 44th member state, on 24 April 2002.

The High Representative will emphasise the need for a sustained effort on the part of the incoming governments and parliaments in BiH to push for adoption, ratification and implementation of key conventions and laws identified by the CoE as part of the post-accession agenda. This process is not just a matter of complying with CoE requirements: the accession of BiH to international conventions on human rights and civil rights, and the strengthening of the rule of law will deliver material advantages to the citizens of BiH.

The High Representative will also brief the Monitoring Committee on the Jobs and Justice agenda; the introduction of countrywide VAT and single customs; and the reform of the BiH education system.

While the High Representative is in Strasbourg he will also meet CoE Director-General of Political Affairs Klaus Schumann, and the Committee of Ministers' Group of Rapporteurs on Democratic Stability, which is responsible for facilitating the detailed implementation of post-accession criteria.

The next meeting of the PIC Steering Board will take place in Brussels on Thursday (30 January).

The key topics of discussion will be establishing a single

customs administration and a countrywide VAT in BiH, return-related issues, and the setting-up of a special division within the Court of BiH to deal with the domestic prosecution of war crimes.

The PIC Steering Board will consider the OHR's Mission Implementation Plan. I should point out that this is not a plan for the International Community's withdrawal from BiH: it is the next logical step in BiH's move towards greater European integration, and therefore reducing the need for the intrusive use of Bonn powers. This clearly means that more responsibility will have to be taken by BiH's elected representatives

As you know, much hangs on assuring rapid political agreement on single customs and countrywide VAT. The whole of the EU has said clearly that if BiH is to move towards Europe, progress through feasibility study towards the Stabilisation and Association process and assure continued financial support from the EU then there must be results next month.

The European Union's General Affairs Council yesterday issued a statement welcoming the formation of governments at the State and Republika Srpska levels, and looking forward to the prompt formation of the Federation government.

The GAC urged the BiH authorities to proceed rapidly with the implementation of the reforms necessary for progress in the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), including establishing a single state-level customs and VAT system.

The Bulldozer Committee held a meeting yesterday in Mostar, where local business people itemised the problems they have with pointless bureaucratic obstacles. Representatives from around 70 companies attended. Mostar Mayor Hamdija Jahic and Deputy Mayor Neven Tomic also took part, as did representatives of the local authorities and the IC, and chambers of commerce. Deputy High Representative and Head of

OHR South Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot opened the meeting by welcoming all present.

Deputy Mayor Tomic noted that many of the problems experienced by business people arise from the fact that a Single Economic Space hasn't yet been fully established in BiH. He said that a major problem is the absence of effective sanctions against law-breakers.

This, as you know, has been a central theme running through the High Representative's comments – and those of the International Community as a whole – on promoting serious economic reform. Existing arrangements for the collection of sales tax and customs levies, for example, are riddled with opportunities for thieves to steal public money without any fear of being punished. Reform of the economic system, together with reform of the judiciary, is designed to tackle this problem on two fronts.

Business people attending yesterday's meeting specifically called for the establishment of State-level VAT, and called for faster implementation of the Single Economic Space. They also expressed dissatisfaction with:

– The overlapping of the responsibilities between various levels of authority

– The sluggishness of bureaucracy

– Flawed interpretation of laws

– Oversized administration

High interest rates; and inadequate mechanisms to ensure implementation of court decisions.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

The OSCE Head of mission, Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, and deputy head of Mission, Ambassador Henry Zipper de Fabiani

will be heading for Brussels this week, where they will attend the meeting of the Peace Implementation Council. While in Brussels, they will consult with NATO headquarters and the European Union, regarding OSCE key areas, for instance, security issues and human rights.

Secondly, the OSCE is hosting a regional conference in Sarajevo on Roma refugees and Displaced Persons here in Sarajevo. This is to remind you that the press is invited to attend the concluding part of the conference, which is scheduled to start at 16:00 today.

The conference is one of a series that have taken place in the framework of the Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe. It attempts to compare the situation of Roma refugees in different countries in the region and will discuss durable solutions to some of the dilemmas that Roma refugees and displaced persons are faced with.

Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

Srebrenica Incident

As we saw in the papers this morning there was an attempt to steal a van from the workers at the memorial centre in Podgare village on the night of 26-27. The perpetrators were not very adept at this crime only managing to damage the car as they were trying to drive away. (Steering wheel broken). According to media reports, the workers deemed the response of the local police professional and they also stated that they came immediately to the scene following the incident.

EUPM co-locator is monitoring the case closely.

DPHoM in Srebrenica

Acting EUPM Commissioner is scheduled to visit police and municipal authorities in Srebrenica on Friday. I can give you further details at the press conference on Thursday when I can

distribute a Media Advisory.

Human Trafficking in Canton 7

On Sunday, near Capljina, a victim of Human Trafficking was found in a taxi, checked by BiH police (SBS). Two local males were found in the vehicle and one woman without documents. In the ensuing investigation it was established that the woman, a FRY citizen had been lured to Medugorje by her acquaintance, also a female FRY citizen. During investigation, the detained female without documents, asked for protection and help from the SBS BiH. She was taken to a hospital in Capljina.

Several individuals have been detained and questioned by the local police who are leading the investigation in cooperation with the local SBS Field Office. EUPM co-locators to SBS and local BiH police in Canton 7 are following the case closely.

This is yet another sad story of Human Trafficking, however, we intent to see further development in these matters.

Major Shawn Mell – SFOR

Good morning, I have two points today. First, I'd like to provide an update to the detention of Mr. Fijuljanin. As you know, the Tri-Presidency and the Federation Prime Minister sent letters to Lt. Gen. Ward regarding the status of Mr. Filuljanin.

Lt. Gen. Ward responded to those letters late last week and although I won't get into the specifics of his response, he expressed the current position of SFOR regarding the on going investigation and our continued co-operation with the FMUP. That being said, Mr. Filuljanin remains detained in Tuzla as the investigation into his activities continues. There has been no decision made on his disposition.

My second point. The 39th meeting of the Joint Military Commission was held on Friday at Camp Butmir. Lt. Gen. Ward

congratulated the VRS and VF commanders for reaching the personnel reductions so quickly, but expressed concern for the affordability of the current numbers. He stressed the need for the Active Reserve Concept in order to maintain professional and highly trained military forces at an affordable cost.

Also discussed was the overall situation regarding the weapons storage sites.

Lt. Gen. Ward believes that there is an excessive amount of dangerous and useless munitions being stored, which results in vast sums of money being spent for unnecessary security and building maintenance. A five-phased plan was discussed to remedy the problem over the next two years.

And finally, Lt. Gen. Ward is encouraged by the 2002 demining statistics but identified a need to do more. He would like the resources for demining to be reorganized into a centralized demining unit by the start of the demining season in March.

Kevin Sullivan – OHR

Just add to what John Oscars said about the Podgare incident; that the High Representation wrote to the Republika Srpska Minister of Interior calling for this to be investigated fully and the perpetrators to be apprehended and put through the justice system. It is something the High Representative will monitor very closely.

Questions and Answers

Q: Ibrahim Begovic' – Vanja-BHTV

This question is for SFOR: Is there a firing range on Mount

Igman where SFOR conducts exercises?

A: MAJ Shawn Mell – SFOR

Yes.

Q: Ljuvic' Spomenka – FTV

In a letter that the SFOR sent to the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina there is no clear stance. Are you going to give a sharp reply in your new letter and why didn't you reply to the question about the chamber of human rights regarding the detention of Mr. Filuljanin and his human rights?

A.: MAJ Shawn Mell – SFOR

General Ward's response to the Tri-Presidency was just as I have said. The

investigation continues; we continue to co-operate with the FMOP and there has been no decision at this time as to the disposition to Mr. Filuljanin.

Q: Ljuvic' Spomenka – FTV

My second question refers to the new letter sent to you by the Presidency and whether SFOR will response to the chamber of human rights request about Mr. Filuljanin and his handing over to Bosnian authorities.

A: MAJ Shawn Mell – SFOR

I am not aware of a new letter being sent to SFOR. The last letter that was received was one that we just recently responded to. That was responded to on 'Friday.

Q: Hawton Nick – BBC

The letter that you did respond to, what was it asking you to respond to?

A: MAJ Shawn Mell -SFOR

The content of the letter is between the Tri-Presidency and LTG Ward. It was requesting information on Mr. Filunjanin's status. Basically, the response was just that. It's an ongoing investigation, we continue to work with the FMOP, and that their has been no disposition on the status of Mr. Filunjanin at this point.

Q: Hawton Nick – BBC

I understand that there's been a letter from the Bosnian authority asking SFOR to hand Filunjanin over to them in the light of the judgement of the human rights chamber here in Bosnia, which says that SFOR, in effect, is illegally holding this man.

A: MAJ Shawn Mell –SFOR

There has been a request to turn him over to the FMOP, yes.

Q: Hawton Nick – BBC

When was that request and what is your response?

A: MAJ Shawn Mell –SFOR

That came in about the same time as the Tri-Presidency letter. The response was the same; we understand the views of the Federation Prime Minister and the Tri-Presidency. The case continues to be investigated, we continue to co-operate with the FMOP, but there has been no decision as to his disposition. That's about all I can say at this point.

Q: Hawton Nick – BBC

Are you holding him illegally?

A: MAJ Shawn Mell –SFOR

That's not for me to decide.

Q: Hawton Nick – BBC

Just one related matter; to what extent, if at all, does SFOR believe there to be a credible threat from Al Qiaeda in Bosnia at the moment?

A: MAJ Shawn Mell –SFOR

Well we continually assess the threat in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Obviously we do not condone extremism or extremist activity. If we do come upon extremist activity, we will take appropriate action. Obviously we do not discuss the threat at this point but it is always something we are assessing.

Q: Zaimovic' Denis-Hayat

Can you tell me why the decision to hand over Mr. Filuljanin to Bosnian authorities was never made? Does that mean that SFOR doesn't have enough confidence in local authorities, or in this particular case, Federal Ministry of Interior?

A: MAJ Shawn Mell –SFOR

SFOR has complete confidence in the Bosnia and Herzegovina government. The problem is we have an ongoing investigation and until we are completed with the investigation, there can be no disposition on him. Keep in mind we are working with the FMOP as part of this investigation, but as I said, at this point there has been no decision on his disposition.