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

Subject: **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 18 March 2003**

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 18 March 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Vedran Persic	• Speech on the economy • Senior Deputy High Representative visit to Doboj, Tuzla and Bijeljina • Meeting to discuss the current political affairs in BiH
b. OSCE	Emir Salihovic	• OSCE workshops and seminars on improving the work of municipalities
c. SFOR	Captain Dale MacEachern	• Supplementary report on the ORAO matter from the RS Supreme Defence Council

2. Twenty-five members of the media including three television crews attended the conference.

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

Vedran Persic – OHR

The High Representative will give a keynote speech on the economy at a lunch today organized by the American Chamber of

Commerce. He will outline the steps that have already been taken to eliminate outdated job-destroying legislation, and he will look forward to the steps that must now be taken if Bosnia and Herzegovina is to realize its potential prosperity. Reviewing progress on single customs and countrywide VAT, the Elektroprivreda audits, the Bulldozer Committee and the economic reform legislation that has been passed by the State and Entity parliaments, the High Representative will repeat something he has said many times in the past; that it is not the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina who are failing, it's not the workers or the entrepreneurs – it's the business environment, which scares away investors instead of attracting them. Much more has to be done in order to make the Bosnia and Herzegovina business environment competitive. This has to be done systematically and quickly, because unless we improve the business environment there won't be any investment, and unless there is more investment there won't be any new jobs. Journalists who wish to cover the High Representative's speech should be at the Holiday Inn by 12.45.

Senior Deputy High Representative Gerhard Enver Schrombgens will visit Doboj, Tuzla and Bijeljina on Wednesday. In Doboj and Bijeljina ambassador Schrombgens will meet the majors Petrovic and Ljubojevic, and in Tuzla he will visit Podrinje Identification Project and the DNA laboratory. Details of this visit could be found at the table outside.

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will meet today with the Political Director of the Third European Department of the Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Alexander Nikolaevich Alexeev. The High Representative and the Director Alexeev will discuss current political affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina especially in the light of the overall reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina as outlined in the "Jobs & Justice" program.

Emir Salihovic – OSCE

Officials from nineteen municipalities will attend OSCE workshops and seminars in the first three months of 2003, focussing on improving the work of municipalities.

Municipalities that have recently joined OSCE's Municipal Infrastructure Finance and Implementation Project (MIFI) will start with a seminar focussing on roles and responsibilities of elected officials and parliamentary procedures. Councillors from Rogatica, Modrica, Drvar, Jajce, Cazin, Ugljevik, Citluk, Kakanj, Prozor Rama and Sokolac will attend the seminars, which are designed to support them in exercising their role as elected officials in governing the local community. The focus will be on how to make the work of the Municipal Council/Assembly more efficient, effective and accountable. Furthermore, mayors, heads of departments and finance staff from the same municipalities will attend a seminar on budget and financial management. It will centre on sound financial management based on realistic and transparent budgeting.

These follow workshops in February and early March, which the OSCE Mission conducted for Municipal Development Planning Committees. The workshops in Vogosca, Maglaj, Kljuc, Lukavac, Prnjavor, Ljubuski, Kotor Varos, Foca/Srbinje and Vlasenica are designed to assist members of the committees in drafting municipal development plans. OSCE experts advise on how to identify development priorities, develop capital investment plans and translate those plans into concrete action, such as projects for improving the infrastructure of a municipality or the social situation of citizens.

Following the seminars, the Mission will closely monitor and assist participating municipalities in implementing their plans.

Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Good morning, I have one point for you today.

Yesterday at approximately 1730hrs, the Commander of SFOR, Lieutenant General William E. Ward, confirmed that he has received the supplementary report on the ORAO matter from the Republika Srpska Supreme Defence Council.

SFOR is now in the process of translating this report. After translation is complete, the contents of the report will be analysed in detail by SFOR, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and OSCE representatives. It is not envisaged that any further comment on the report will be made until this process has been completed.

Questions and Answers

Q: Eldar Sarajlic – FTV

This question is for the OHR and SFOR: I believe that you expect this report to release something new unlike the previous one that was more about establishing responsibility. What if this report doesn't bring any news if you can't establish responsibility?

A: Vedran Persic – OHR

For the start let me first confirm that indeed the Office of the High Representative has received this report and as our colleague from SFOR said, in the days to come we will review this report more detailed so there will be no further comments. Maybe I could say that certain steps will be made following the next meeting of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) in Brussels and then we will make you aware of our further steps. You probably know that the High Representative has repeatedly said that as far as this affair is concerned, the only thing that is certain is that will not do nothing, certain measures will be taken and certain steps will be taken.

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

I completely concur with my colleague's comments here and I'd take it one step further, what your asking is in the realm of speculation and when it comes to matters of this nature, accuracy is very, very important for us, and we don't deal in speculation. So, what we're going to do is take our time, analyse this report in detail, and we're going to do a high quality analysis of it and then we'll go from there based on whatever conclusions we can draw from the analysis.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

This is a purely technical question: Will there be any media advisory or statement for the press following the meeting between the High Representative, Mr. Paddy Ashdown and the Russian official Mr. Alexeev?

A: Vedran Persic – OHR

Well give us a call later we'll try to provide some details regarding this meeting for you. The topics are well known on the current situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Well will see what the two gentlemen specifically discuss during the meeting and then we will let you know.

Q: Eldar Sarajlic – FTV

Another question for SFOR: Briefly, has any new information regarding the support network for Radovan Karadzic?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

I'm sorry can you further define your question, it seems very broad.

Q: Eldar Sarajlic – FTV

Do you have any new fresh information regarding the support network for Radovan Karadzic? Any aspect of any support,

financial, military any support?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Well, your question to a great degree touches in the realm of intelligence and as you are probably aware, we do not get into that specific area. The reason being is, what we don't want to do is we don't want to compromise the integrity of any potential current operation or potential future operation. So, I can't really give you much more than that.

Q: Nedeljko Zelenovic – Glas Srpski

Could you now tell us what was taken, confiscated at the facilities in Pale, Luca Vica the city of assembly of Srpska Sarajevo during the raid? We have been informed that certain items have been returned. Could you tell us what as taken away and what was returned?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

As I mentioned earlier in one of these conferences, we took a number of documents as well as computers. I can't be anymore specific than that at this point. We are still in the process of analysing that material. Again, accuracy in these matters is of utmost importance to us. So that process is on going and that process will be a lengthy one. As far as the items that were returned, as far as that particular question is concerned, I don't have that information at this time. If you want to give a call this afternoon perhaps I can give you more on that.