

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

CPIC/Media Conferences

Subject: **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 24 June 2003**

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday, 24 June 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Mario Brkic	• High Representative visits Kasindolska Street Families of Missing Persons • High Representative Receives Innovators Award • HR welcomes progress in the fight against crime
b. OSCE	Zinaida Delic	• Ministers of Education to discuss unification of "Two Schools Under One Roof" • Textbook Review Commission completes bulk of work • OSCE hosts the first donors meeting for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training Centres
c. EUPM	Kilian Wahl	• No Statement Received
d. UNHCR	Bakir Jalovcic	• No Statement Received
e. ICTY	Refik Hodzic	• No Statement Received

f. SF0R	Captain Dale MacEachern	• Derventa Incident • Visit of the Pope
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2. Thirty-one members of the media including four television crews attended the conference.

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

Mario Brkic – OHR

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will today meet with the families of missing persons from the Ilidza Municipality in Sarajevo at the request of Amor Masovic, the head of the Federation Commission for Missing Persons and exhumations. The High Representative greatly admires the courage and strength that these families have shown since their loved ones were taken from them over a decade ago, and intends by this visit to underline his support for their efforts in raising public awareness of this terrible legacy of the war. Across BiH families of all ethnic backgrounds are still seeking the truth about what happened to their loved ones, often just wishing that they could give them a dignified burial. The High Representative will call for a renewed effort to the process of exchange of information which will enable a considerable number of the families that are still looking for their missing loved ones to find answers. He urges Governments to intensify their work and increase co-operation on the release of information giving the whereabouts of all missing persons. It is of great significance that this process continues especially in the light of the reconciliation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but most importantly to help those still searching for truth and justice.

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, has been awarded with the Great Medal of Honour concorus Lepine, on the occasion of the 102. International Exhibition of Innovations "Concours Lepine", held in Paris from 29 April to the 11 May. International Exhibition of Innovations says this medal was awarded for his contribution to promoting innovation world-wide, and especially in BiH, by, for example, raising public awareness. Paddy Ashdown has said repeatedly that one of BiH's richest resources is the talent of its people. The reforms initiated by the Bulldozer Commission will play a major role in unlocking this talent for business, and promoting further innovation in BiH. The award ceremony will be held at the Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Branislava Djurdjeva 10, Sarajevo) on Wednesday, June 25, at 14.00 hours.

As you may know, the Federation Customs Administration (FCA) has submitted criminal charges to the Prosecutors Office, Mostar, against the GIPI Company from Citluk for serious customs frauds including misdescription of goods (to avoid 'prelevmani' tax) and undervaluation. These initial charges relate to a revenue loss of some 650,000 KM but with further charges to follow the total amount of fraud exposed by Customs Officers could be as high as 12 Million KM. The extent of the fraud was discovered following advice and assistance from the Customs and Fiscal Assistance Office to Bosnia and Herzegovina (CAFAO-BiH) in obtaining the original/genuine invoices and other documentation from the relevant foreign authorities, including Germany, Austria and Slovenia, which were then compared to the invoices presented by GIPI for Customs clearance. I would just like to give you the HR's reaction to this, and I quote: "Whether or not crimes have been committed in this case is now a matter for the courts. Those charged are innocent until proven guilty. That is a basic principle of a modern, independent legal system. But what this case shows is that the tools for fighting crime and high-level corruption are now beginning to work. There is still a long

way to go, and much more needs to be done to strengthen BiH's capacity to tackle these scourges. But I would like to congratulate CAFAO and the BiH authorities for their work in bringing this case to the courts."

Zinaida Delic – OSCE

The Federal Ministry of Education will be meeting today with Cantonal Ministry representatives from Zenica-Doboj, Herzegovina-Neretva, West Herzegovina and Central Bosnia Cantons in Siroki Brijeg to discuss the urgent steps required to bring about full administrative and legal unification of the 52 "two schools under one roof" still operating in the Federation of BiH. OSCE representatives will also attend this meeting. Ministers are expected to issue instructions prior to the end of June setting out the initial steps required to be implemented by September. The instructions will also call for each school to appoint a single School Director and one multi-ethnic School Board. Schools must also register as one legal body and establish joint administrative personnel and develop a joint budget. The continued presence of the two-schools-under-one roof is contrary to the principles and objectives set forth in the Education Reform Strategy, namely to "put an end to segregation and discrimination through education" and to "cut wastage, duplication and inefficiencies in BiH's education system." Earlier this month, the Peace Implementation Council Political Directors expressed strong concern over the continued existence of these schools and called for relevant education ministries to take immediate action towards unification. The OSCE is looking forward to seeing the education ministers discuss and agree on future steps that need to be taken in order to resolve this issue.

The final meeting of the Textbook Review Commission, which has been strongly supported by the OSCE, took place in Mostar over the weekend. At this meeting, the Commission completed harmonisation of all recommendations for Knowing Nature and Society, Geography and Religion in RS and Federation textbooks

for the national subjects. History and Mother Tongue and Literature Textbooks will be finalised within the next two weeks. The completion of the work of the Textbook Review Commission will mark a crucial step forward towards implementation of pledge one of the Education Reform Strategy, including full implementation of the Interim Agreement on Returnee Children. While the work of the Textbook Review Commission tackles the very difficult issue of content included in national subject textbooks, it has become obvious that larger questions – for example, how to teach disputed histories – still exist and will need to be dealt with through the longer term process of modernisation. In early July, a final report will be sent to all Education Ministries by the Co-ordinators of the Textbook Commission and the OSCE. These recommendations will be forwarded to textbook publishers, thereby ensuring that inappropriate content does not appear in new prints or reprints to be used in the next school year.

The newly established Judicial and Prosecutorial Training Centres, are set up to provide judges and prosecutors in BiH with sustainable, high-quality and standardised training courses. In an effort to raise the necessary money to keep these centres going, the OSCE is hosting the first donors' co-ordination meeting today. Donations from the International Community are needed to supplement the funds already provided within the budgets of the Entity Governments. A considerable deal of time, money and effort have already gone into opening the two training centres that are now established– one in the Republika Srpska and one in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their directors have been in place for three months, and will address potential donors today, and provide them with details of the centres' strategic plans and their specific needs. The OSCE set up the donor's meeting as part of its role in overseeing the establishment of the Centres and co-ordinating capacity building and technical assistance. The OSCE has invited ABA-CEELI, Council of Europe, Royal Netherlands Embassy, Ambassade de France en Bosnie-Hezegovine,

Spanish Embassy, Canadian Embassy, German Embassy, Embassy of Switzerland, Swedish Embassy, US Embassy, US Department of Justice, USAID, Independent Judicial Commission, High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, UNDP, European Commission, DFID, Internationale Rechtliche Zusammenarbeit (IRZ), GTZ, International Human Rights Law Group, OHR and Alberta University to take part in the first donors' meeting.

Kilian Wahl – EUPM

No Statement Received.

Bakir Jalovcic – UNHCR

No Statement Received.

Refik Hodzic – ICTY

No Statement Received.

Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Good morning I have two points this morning. My first point pertains to last Friday's

unfortunate incident at the Weapons Storage Site NV039 near Derventa. On behalf of the Commander of SFOR, Lieutenant General William E. Ward and SFOR, I would like to express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims of this incident. Immediately following the explosion, SFOR rendered support to the VRS in the form of security, Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) and construction. SFOR personnel cordoned off the area of the explosion to prevent further casualties and to protect the scene for investigation purposes. EOD personnel cleared the area of explosive debris so that investigations into the incident could begin safely. Construction personnel from Tuzla rebuilt doors on other buildings in the site that were destroyed in the blast so that those buildings and the weapons in them could be secured. SFOR is now in the process of conducting a detailed

investigation into this incident. This investigation is separate and concurrent to an investigation being conducted by the VRS. If appropriate to do so, SFOR will share the results of its investigation. This extremely unfortunate incident is a harsh reminder that there is an excessive amount of obsolete weapons and ammunition in BiH. A significant quantity of these obsolete weapons and ammunition are improperly stored or have been stored for too long and as a result have become unstable. This problem is further compounded by the fact that a number of these sites are located in or near urban areas. This represents a serious threat to the safety of the people of BiH and in particular those living in residential areas close to these sites. The political and military leaders of BiH must take more action. Reduction is an absolute requirement. SFOR unequivocally supports the efforts of the High Representative to reform and restructure the Armed Forces of BiH. Weapons Storage Sites are an important part of the process and the High Representative has directed that they be reduced to less than 10.

My second point pertains to Sunday's visit of the Pope. This extremely high profile international event transpired successfully without incident. This was due in no small part to the great deal of effort expended by numerous organizations in the planning and preparations for this event. COMSFOR would like to express his congratulations to all that cooperated in ensuring that this event took place peacefully. This success reflects very well on both the RS and BiH. It is a clear indication of the progress towards normalization that has been made in BiH since the war and the people of BiH have good reason to be very proud. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

There were no questions.