

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

Subject: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 15 October 2002

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 15 October 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Kevin Sullivan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with media to discuss future press conference input.• PLIP.• HR's letter to political parties on public appointments.
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reaction to initial draft of education reform document.
c. UNMIBH	Kirsten Haupt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update on certifications.• Police academies.
d. UNHCR	Bakir Jalovcic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement.
e. ICTY	Rafik Hodzic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No statement.
f. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SFOR troops conducted a routine inspection of the ORAO factory in Bijeljina

2. Thirty-one members of the media including five television crews attended the conference.

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

C. Barraud
Lt. Col. (FR A),

Kevin Sullivan– OHR

If anybody cares to hang around for 5 or 10 minutes after this morning's press conference, it would be useful to have a chat about how these press conferences could be more effective. What we would like to do is get your opinions on the sorts of material that you would find useful and the types of presentation that could make for a more lively event. We have considered several possibilities, but we would like to have your input, so after the press conference is finished, if you want to hang around we can possibly have a discussion about that next door.

Just one item from Office of the High Representative, this morning and indeed from the Property Law Implementation Plan agencies on block.

There has been a noticeable increase in recent months in parts of Canton Sarajevo of instances where local officials have exerted pressure or have succumbed to pressure to obstruct the return of refugees and displaced persons to their property. The speed of property law implementation in Canton Sarajevo has fallen behind all the other cantons and has even fallen behind the average in the Republika Srpska.

The Property Law Implementation Plan agencies, OHR, OSCE, UNHCR, CRPC and UNMIBH, wish to make it absolutely clear that obstruction of property law implementation by local officials will not be tolerated. The right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes is one of the cornerstones of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Implementing the property laws is not discretionary; the local authorities are obliged to carry out the law, and it makes no difference whether they are operating under a post-election technical mandate. Around 110,000 claimants all over Bosnia and Herzegovina are still

denied their property rights, this is mainly because local authorities are enforcing the laws selectively and do not always provide enough alternative accommodation.

The rights of temporary occupants must not be used to prevent claimants from repossessing their homes. On the 12 September, as you may remember the Property Law Implementation Plan agencies introduced their new strategic direction this requires that responsible authorities throughout the country implement the property laws more strictly, the one-month warning period expired today.

The International Community has already indicated sources of alternative accommodation to the authorities and the need to act on that now. Authorities will not be allowed to use their failure to provide alternative accommodation as a pretext for slowing down the return of refugees and displaced persons to their original homes.

The International Community will take whatever steps necessary to ensure that the incumbent authorities and the incoming authorities abide by their statutory obligations, carry out their duties efficiently, and do nothing to infringe the fundamental right of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to return to their homes.

A second small point from Office of the High Representative, there will be a press conference this afternoon at 15:30 at the Office of the High Representative. At which, the High Representative Paddy Ashdown will comment on his message to the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities urging them to maintain the integrity of public appointments.

That is at 15:30 this afternoon at the Office of the High Representative with Paddy Ashdown. Thank you.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

Good morning everyone. I want to talk about education today.

Reactions to an initial draft of an education reform document were generally constructive and positive, when the draft was presented at a meeting with representatives from the International Community and Education Ministers in Banja Luka yesterday.

The document, which is to be put forward by the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to the Peace Implementation Council next month, was discussed by both Entity Education Ministers, most Cantonal Ministers and representatives from a number of International Organisations.

At the meeting six working groups presented draft texts on, education access and non-discrimination, quality and modernisation of primary and secondary education, quality and modernisation of vocational education and higher education, education financing and management and reform of education legislation.

Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft noted that the next step is now to compile those drafts into one document, which then will be subject to further consultations. I quote, "The six working groups are over 80 percent national experts with internationals playing a supportive and facilitating capacity. At the November, Peace Implementation Council meeting, the final document must be first and foremost a product of, by and for the citizens of this country. The aim is to provide an education system that will keep young people here and not have them go out of Bosnia and Herzegovina" said Ambassador Beecroft.

He stressed that the draft represents just the first step in the process of developing a strategy paper for education reform, there was still much work to be done he said: logistical work, editorial work and most importantly political work.

The Senior Deputy High Representative Ambassador Gerhard Enver

Schroembgens reminded those present that Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities must contribute and support education reforms, since those are a part of the post-accession obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe. He also stressed that the political will needed to ensure commitment of both outgoing and incoming governments was essential.

The implementation of the Interim Agreement on Returnee Children was also discussed at the meeting. Ambassador Beecroft highlighted the need to solve problems where they have arisen, such as in Drvar. Ambassador Beecroft and Federation Education Minister Mujo Demirovic, discussed specifically the situation there and agreed on the need to ensure access of returnee children to national subjects. Beecroft reminded the minister that the OSCE mission is actively involved in finding a solution to the Drvar situation.

He welcomed positive steps that have been taken there, in particular the initiative to hire returnee teachers to teach one of the national subjects, but added that nothing short of full implementation, provision of all national subjects was acceptable. Just for the record those national subjects are language and literature, history, geography, and religious instruction. That is all from me.

Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

Good morning. I have two points for you mainly updates on issues that we have been speaking about earlier.

The first is on certification, I want to give you updates on the housing situation of police officers as well as verification of diplomas.

According to the latest data available to UNMIBH, there are currently still 126 police officers who, are in violation of property legislation and have not yet regularised their

housing status. You may recall that at the end of August, there will still about 1,400 police officers who had to clear their housing situation and at the end of September, it was still 266. The currently remaining 126 police officers are either illegal or double occupants or have not provided any documentation to clarify their housing situation. Police officers are required to regularise their housing situation in order to be certified by UNMIBH.

Another requirement for certification is the validity of educational credentials. After checking diplomas of about 15,000 police officers, 173 were found to have fraudulent diplomas. In these cases, Ministries of Interior are tasked to initiate respective administrative and legal measures. As we have seen in the past weeks, Ministries of Interior have increasingly taken ownership of this process and dismissed police officers, who were found not to meet basic standards of education or integrity.

There remains however a large number of diplomas where verification is required abroad as well as within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those within Bosnia and Herzegovina include cases where files were destroyed or went missing during the war, so the process needs a little more time. We will continue to give you updates on all the aspects of the certification process when we have them.

The second is on the police academies, yesterday on Monday, 14 October, the seventh class of police cadets started their training at the Republika Srpska Police Academy in Banja Luka. The 125 cadets include 37 female cadets. The majority of the cadets are Bosniaks with 92 cadets and the remainder are 19 Serbs, 12 Croats and 2 cadets of other ethnic backgrounds.

One essential part of the minority recruitment project, are the so-called refresher courses, which train former police officers in order for them to rejoin the police force. In

Vraca Police Academy in Sarajevo, testing has completed for the seventh round of refresher courses here. Twenty candidates passed the testing and will start their training on 28 October. The class that will be completed by, 6 December consists of 14 Serbs, 4 Croats and 1 Bosniak. The testing for the refresher course at the Republika Srpska Police Academy in Banja Luka will take place this week on, Thursday 17 and Friday 18 October. A total of 23 candidates have been invited they are 21 Bosniaks and 2 Croats. The class will also last from, 28 October to 6 December 2002. That is all I have for you today.

Bakir Jalovcic – UNHCR

Good morning. UNHCR has no statement today.

Rafik Hodzic – ICTY

Good morning. Also no statement from ICTY today.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

Good morning. I have one point for you today related to the unannounced routine inspection of the ORAO factory in Bijeljina by SFOR troops.

On Friday 11 October, SFOR troops conducted an unannounced inspection of the ORAO factory complexes in Bijeljina. The inspection was carried out in a safe and professional manner with very little disruption to the production schedule and workers of ORAO. The small contingent of SFOR troops, which was left on site Saturday evening after the majority of the inspection was completed left the ORAO factory shortly after 5 p.m. Sunday.

The results of the inspection will only be known in a few weeks once we have had time to analyse the information. At this time it would be inappropriate to discuss partial results of the inspection, SFOR considers this inspection to be

extremely important and will take the time necessary to conduct a thorough evaluation of the information.

SFOR is grateful for the assistance of the ORAO managers and workers and the Republika Srpska Ministry of Defence in facilitating this routine inspection.

Kevin Sullivan – OHR

Do we have any questions?

Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

If I may just add something, I have to correct one of the figures that I gave you. I have just consulted notes on the verification of the housing situation of police officers, in fact it is down to 120 and I can also give you the breakdown. In the Entities it is 120 all over and they are made up of 85 cases in the Republika Srpska, 24 cases in the Federation and the remaining are 11 cases that would concern the Brcko District Court Police and the State Border Service. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

Yves, you have said repeatedly that this inspection of the ORAO factory has nothing to do with Ambassador Bonds, allegations that this factory was actually supplying Iraq with warplane spare parts. But, how often do you take computer files and other documents from the facilities where you conduct these inspections?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

To set the records strait, we did not take anything away from ORAO. What we do is take information, we copy information, we

look at the factory itself and record keeping to ensure that government ordinance factories follow the rules set out in the instructions to parties. We did not take anything away from ORAO.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

Do you still claim that this inspection has nothing to do with Ambassador Bonds, allegations?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

That is correct. This was the first inspection of ORAO since it became a government ordinance factory on 12 September. As such it is within our mandate to do these routine inspections and this one was quite important because this is the first one, so it is going to be used to set a baseline for ORAO. As time progresses we can see what they have done wrong, what they have done right and help them out along the process because the guidelines are fairly complicated and we are there to assist ORAO in following the guidelines.

Q: Yasin Rawashdeh – KUNA

When are you going to announce the result of your investigation in ORAO factory?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

As I said earlier, this first inspection of ORAO is important one, as it will set a baseline for future inspections. As such, SFOR will take the time required to conduct a thorough review of the information. I will not give you an estimate as to when SFOR will be in a position to release our findings.