Transcript of the press conference following Peace Implementation Council Steering Board meeting

Good afternoon,

Thank you for coming in such great numbers.

I am going to give you an outline of the conclusions of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board.

The Communiqué that we have unanimously adopted will be distributed to you in a few minutes. I must emphasize that this time the Communiqué is a bit more concise, for we have agreed that we want a new approach and that we want to focus only on several topics in the Communiqué. This of course does not mean that other issues that we have been emphasizing are forgotten, and you know all these issues. Unfortunately, all these issues all these years have been repeated many times.

For all those who carefully monitor the political situation in this country there are no surprises. Politicians have not fulfilled five objectives that were set for the OHR transition. For the only concrete progress that has been made since the last session we can give thanks to the OHR team, headed by Jason Taylor, and that is the property inventory. Of course, there is also the visa-free regime issue that has also been successful. However, if we speak about 5+2 this is of

course the state and defense property inventory.

The Peace Implementation Council expressed its gratitude to this team that in less than two months visited all cadastre and geodetic offices in BiH and in doing so collected all relevant information and, if there had not been obstructions on the part of geodetic offices in Republika Srpska, I am confident that today we would have also provided you with the complete inventory. We will complete this work in the following days, following weeks, perhaps at most in two, three weeks and then you will also have the insight into the state property. We will complete the technical part of the job, and politicians will have to do their task and that is to reach a political agreement on the apportionment of the property and to adopt the necessary legislation.

To those who have been saying that OHR only wishes to extend its mandate, and there were such news as well, I'd say the following: the property inventory is a proof that the OHR is working on the fulfilment of conditions for its own closure. The question is what some of the politicians are ready to do to fulfill these objectives? Is their wish to take the full responsibility or will all remain just words? Although the plan to end the supervision in Brčko was adopted during the last PIC session, to my great sorrow, the supervisor for Brčko and I had to inform the PIC members that one of the entities has not fulfilled its obligations from the Final Arbitration Award. Mr. Raffi Gregorian is here as well, he will be able to tell you later on in detail as to what has not been fulfilled, and one of these things that have not been fulfilled is the publication of my decisions in the Official Gazette of Republika Srpska. You know that under the RS law, decisions by the Assembly, Government, prime minister but also those by the OHR should be published in the Official Gazette. This has not happened yet, although my decisions on Brčko were published in the Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Official Gazette in Brčko, but not yet in the RS.

When it comes to defense property – which is of key importance for the consolidation of defense reform and achievement of BiH's aspiration to become a NATO member, unfortunately, the job has not been done.

Although the plan to end the supervision in Brčko was adopted during the last PIC session, to my great sorrow, the supervisor for Brčko and I had to report that one of the entities refuses to fulfill its obligations from the Final Arbitration Award.

Due to non-fulfillment of five objectives, the Peace Implementation Council has not discussed either at this session the decision on the transition of the OHR into the Office of the EU Special Representative.

The greater part of yesterday's session was devoted to talks with leaders of seven political parties and the chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Apart from exchanging views about fulfilment of priorities for closure of OHR, we also discussed the local process of constitutional reform. The international community views OHR's closure as a step on the road towards the final goal, and that is BiH as a stable country irreversibly on the road to Euro-Atlantic integration.

Therefore, although constitutional reform is not a requirement for OHR closure, the respect for human rights and ensuring functional institutions is an obligation of politicians towards all citizens. Essentially, everyone agrees with the estimate that there is a strong need to resolve the issue of constitutional changes, in order to open the European road.

It is up to your politicians to carry out all tasks that will move this country towards European integration. European Union representatives stated very clearly there can be no candidate status until the priorities for OHR closure are met, because with the completion of these objectives BiH would send out a

signal that the country and its institutions have matured sufficiently, not just to close this office down but also in order to accept and tackle all the challenges of the process of integration into EU and NATO. And they are no small challenges. When my country joined the European community, there were around eighty thousand pages that Austria had to take over, and now, apparently, it is around one hundred thousand pages, and all this is difficult work, so the challenges are great indeed.

One bright example is the fulfilment of most (practically all) requirements for visa abolition. The success in resolving these complicated and difficult tasks demonstrated that constructive agreement is not only possible, but also successful. Bosnia and Herzegovina had a task to fulfil around 174 requirements from the Visa Liberalisation Road Map. One of the last requirements was printing biometric passports, and the distribution of new passports is currently underway. The road, as I already said, was successful. I personally advocated for this in Brussels and other capitals, because I believe that abolition of visas is exceptionally important for all BiH citizens. This progress must be an encouragement for future successes.

Yesterday we also talked about the situation in Mostar. It has been more than one year since the local elections, and Mostar still has no mayor or a budget. On several occasions I said that elections in Germany took place one year after the Mostar elections, and Germany already has the Government, prime minister etc, while Mostar still does not have its mayor. Today we are faced with strikes and non-functioning of crucial institutions. The PIC has asked me to focus on resolving this issue, which I will do after consultations with ambassadors by the end of this month or early December.

Our goal is the same as yours – stable and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina on the road to EU membership. And on this road you have a partner in the international community. The only

way to progress is a renewed focus that will bring the country closer to European Union. There is no alternative to this, because European Union is the best solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina in political, economical and security sense.

The next meeting of the Peace Implementation Council will take place on 24 and 25 February 2010, when we will again review all these issues and probably the most important question of OHR transition into EUSR.

Thank you.