

Decisions on Mostar of 12 February 1997

On 12 February, President Izetbegovic, President Zubak, Co-Chairman Silajdzic, Vice-Chairman Tomic, Foreign Minister Prlic, Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ) President Rajic, Democratic Action Party (SDA) Vice-President and Prime Minister Bicakcic, Mostar Mayor Prskalo and Deputy Mayor Orucevic met in Sarajevo to address the recent events in Mostar. The meeting was chaired by the Principal Deputy High Representative, Mr. Michael Steiner. Also present were the Commander of the Stabilization Force (SFOR), General Crouch, Acting Police Commissioner Wasserman and Head of the Office of the High Representative South, Sir Martin Garrod.

The participants condemned in strongest terms the violent acts committed in Mostar and all provocative acts preceding the present crisis. They equally condemned the evictions of Mostar citizens and the harassments on the road to and from Mostar which followed the events of Monday. They deeply deplored the bloodshed and the loss of life of Mostar citizens. They expressed their condolences to the bereaved and sympathy to those who were injured.

The participants committed themselves to undertake all efforts to calm down tensions, to overcome the present crisis and to implement fully existing Federation agreements, including the Mostar provisions of the Agreed Measures of the Federation Forum of 3 February. All of the facts must be established. They agreed that the recent acts of violence should not go unpunished and that the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

The following decisions were taken:

1. The participants reconfirmed the request to the International Police Task Force (IPTF) to conduct an independent investigation into the events and to submit a report which should, in particular, identify those individuals responsible for the escalation of violence and the attacks on Mostar citizens. They took note of the fact that for this purpose IPTF established an independent investigation team on 11 February. Its findings will be submitted to the principals of the major implementation agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to the Contact Group within one week.

2. The participants committed themselves personally to ensure that IPTF will receive all available evidence and that police forces will cooperate fully and in good faith in the conduct of the investigation. Local police shall comply with all demands by the investigation team and will assist IPTF in all stages of the investigations, including by making all persons immediately available for interviews by the investigators. The operational responsibility for the provision of the evidence to IPTF lies with the Mayor and his Deputy.

3. The participants agreed that they would accept and endorse the report by IPTF in full and that they would draw the necessary conclusions from it, in particular the following:

(a) Perpetrators will be arrested and brought to trial;

(b) Office holders, including police, found responsible of instigating or participating in violent acts will be dismissed from their offices.

4. The participants guaranteed that all citizens who have been evicted from their homes in the course of the recent events would be enabled to return to their apartments without delay. The participants would also give instructions that all persons responsible for illegal evictions should be identified, arrested and prosecuted. All illegal evictions would be stopped. The participants decided that the Cantonal Minister of Interior and his Deputy would be personally responsible for the implementation of this provision and would submit full compliance reports to the Head of the Office of the High Representative South by 18 February. The participants stressed their determination to dismiss those policemen from their duties who in the judgment of IPTF do not cooperate in the implementation of this provision in good faith. They requested IPTF to monitor closely the return of evicted citizens to their homes.

5. The participants appealed to IPTF and SFOR to keep an increased presence in Mostar until the situation had further stabilized and full freedom of movement was re-established. They requested the authorities that the nightly curfew should remain in place and be enforced by the local police forces of Mostar until IPTF has determined that the security situation will allow its suspension.

6. The participants reconfirmed their commitment to the United Police Force of Mostar (UPFM) and will instruct the police in Mostar to participate fully in its work with immediate effect, including the proper functioning of the joint headquarters.

7. The participants took note of the fact that the carrying of long-barrelled weapons by the police in Mostar is not authorized by IPTF and that IPTF/SFOR will continue to confiscate these weapons from both police and civilians. The participants instructed the local police to remove these weapons immediately and hand them over to SFOR.

8. The participants reconfirmed their commitment to full freedom of movement in and around Mostar. They decided that all existing obstacles to freedom of movement and illegal checkpoints would be immediately removed and that the police forces would, upon the instruction of, and in cooperation with, IPTF and SFOR, have prosecuted those who hinder freedom of movement.

9. The participants agreed to reconnect the telephone lines between East and West Mostar immediately and to keep those lines open.

10. The participants deplored inflammatory statements in the media which had aggravated the situation and contributed considerably to the escalation of the crisis in Mostar. They committed themselves to showing maximum restraint and to instructing the authorities of Mostar and the Herzegovina Neretva Canton to do likewise. Decisions of the Media Expert Commission of the Provisional Elections Commission on inflammatory statements will be implemented. The participants requested the Canton Minister of Interior and his Deputy to nominate media

liaison officers to IPTF in Mostar who should disseminate, on a regular basis and as appropriate, reliable information to the media on the security situation in the city.

11. The Principal Deputy High Representative drew the attention of the participants to the request of the Presidency of the European Union (EU) and the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Conference of 21 January 1997 to the Office of the High Representative to identify those individuals responsible for human rights violations and for serious contravention to the letter and the spirit of the Peace Agreement with a view to barring their travel to Europe and overseas. He announced that on the basis of the findings of the IPTF report he would make recommendations to the EU Governments and to the Steering Board members accordingly.

12. The participants agreed to monitor the situation in Mostar closely and to convene a follow-up meeting as soon as the IPTF report is submitted. The participants requested in particular the media covering the Mostar region to carry the text of this Agreement in full in their news reporting.

In case of any dispute regarding these Decisions, the English language version shall prevail.