

THE COURIER

www.osce.org/croatia

May/June 2006



Photo: Croatian Foreign Ministry

OSCE Senior Staff and Ministry representatives meet for the first plenary session held at the Croatian Foreign Ministry, Zagreb, 23 February, 2006.

The Platform

The OSCE Mission to Croatia was established in 1996 with the aim of improving the situation in the country after the 5-year war. This improvement was to take place in 6 specific fields: the return and reintegration of refugees; the rule of law; media; police; civil society; and improvement of political life in general, which included the proper functioning of public and state institutions, respect for the rights of national minorities, reform of the election system and development of a harmonized curricula for Croat and Serb schools.

Ten years have passed and the country has made remarkable progress. This is mainly due to its own efforts, but also due to the international community. The OSCE Mission has worked effectively in advancing each of the six chapters mentioned above.

This Mission, which once comprised of 657 members, began downsizing in 1998. Today, there are 186 members and nine field offices. Even though some of the chapters covered by the mandate, such as the media, police, and civil society, have seen considerable progress over the years, the structure of the mandate has remained the same.

Regarding refugee return, the Sarajevo Declaration, signed at the beginning of last year, attempted to bring about a regional

solution to this problem. As a result, a working group of the international community in Croatia (the OSCE Mission, the European Commission, UNHCR and U.S. embassy) has been set up and convenes with a delegation headed by the Development Minister, Bozidar Kalmeta, once a month.

Outstanding problems, such as the repossession and reconstruction of property, the electrification of return villages and provision of housing care to those who lost their occupancy/tenancy rights, are discussed. These meetings have been held regularly and effectively since September 2005.

Alongside this working group, two plenary sessions on the remaining five mandate-related issues have been established in co-operation with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice. These sessions are but one of the results from my meeting with Prime Minister Ivo Sanader in January.

The first session, presided over by Foreign Affairs Minister Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, dealt with outstanding technical issues regarding the resolution of the remaining five mandate-related issues.

The second, presided over by Justice Minister Ana Lovrin, focused on improving war crimes trials transferred to Croatia by the Hague Tribunal (ICTY). The OSCE Mission has been tasked to monitor these trials. The participation of the European Commission

and the ICTY will give strength to this last group. It is planned that such sessions would be held once a month.

This complex and ambitious platform - monthly plenary sessions alongside numerous intermediate working groups - is designed to assist progress towards the fulfilment of the mandate in anticipation of the upcoming Mid-Term Review. The Review, which will be presented in Vienna in June, will specify the Mission's priorities for the remaining period and consequently, channel our efforts in the required direction. It will also give Croatia clear guidelines on how best to fulfil our mutually-agreed mandate. All Mission staff will have to be involved in this task.

This work will still require some time, perhaps lots of it. The Croatian authorities are not urging or putting pressure on us to leave, they are aware that we are here to help. This assistance has actually contributed to Croatia's integration processes. This was already evident in the decision to start membership talks with the European Union and will soon most likely also be evident in its NATO aspirations.

Ambassador Jorge Fuentes
Head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia

The Courier is an internal publication produced by the OSCE Mission to Croatia.

Published by the Media & Public Affairs Unit: Antonella Cerasino, Hrvojkica Dokoza, Nikolina Baliija, Petra Martic.

Calendar

2 May - Principals of the Sarajevo Process meet with Development Minister Bozidar Kalmeta.

7 - 10 May - Head of the Spanish Delegation and incoming Chairman of the OSCE Permanent Council, Ambassador Carlos Sanchez de Boado and Italian Ambassador Francesco Bascone visit Zagreb, Zadar and Knin areas.

16 May - 2nd meeting of the Working Group on War Crimes.

7 May - Official opening of the new FO Vukovar office.

15 May - Meeting with Justice Minister, Ana Lovrin.

18 May - HOM visits Daruvar with the Czech Ambassador Peter Burianek and MP Zdenka Cuhnil, representative of the Czech and Slovakian minorities, to discuss minority rights.

26 May - Transparency International Regional Conference on Corruption, Brijuni Island.

26 & 27 May - British embassy/Croatian Parliament/OSCE Mission sponsored training seminar on parliamentary reporting, Split.

15 June - HOM presents the Mission's Mid-term Review to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna.

The Mission: A Retrospective

Form follows function. This is a well known architectural axiom, which I believe should also apply to institutions such as our own Mission

Reviewing the ten year history of the Mission to Croatia, I find that the "form follows function" concept has been, and continues to be, applicable. Although the Mission's mandate has not changed since 1997, the Mission's size and organizational structure have changed as conditions and relations with the Government have changed.

When the Mission to Croatia opened in mid-1996, it consisted of only seven Internationals and a small number of national staff based in Zagreb. Within a year, however, its mandate expanded and the Mission also expanded with a field presence to cover the so-called Areas of Special State Concern, while staff exploded to a peak "on-board" number of 286 Internationals and about 500 nationals by April 1999. At the time, we were primarily a "monitoring mission" and, from 1998 to 2000, we provided a special police monitoring and training presence in the former UNTAES region in Eastern Slavonia.

To fulfil these functions the Mission was hierarchically structured with the headquarters (HQ) in Zagreb, three (at one time four) Co-ordinating Centers and 15 Field Offices and Sub-offices. By the time 2000 and 2001 rolled around, the Mission had completed most of the necessary information gathering, and in April 2001 it produced its

first major "Mid Term Review" detailing the problems and challenges still faced by Croatia in the post-conflict period, as well as steps Croatia needed to take to establish democratic institutions on a firm and enduring footing.

At about the same time, conditions in Eastern Slavonia were such that it proved possible to conclude the Police Monitoring operation, resulting in a massive reduction of some 260 national and international Mission personnel.

Working on the basis of the April 2001 Review, the Mission reached an agreement with the Government in January 2002 to concentrate joint efforts on resolving outstanding issues in five areas of mandate concern: refugee return, rule of law, the media, police reform and civil society development.

The Mission's function shifted from a primarily monitoring role to one of establishing goals and objectives with the Government. This resulted in a reduction of staff previously engaged in information collection. Concurrently, the Mission re-structured the HQ-Field relationship, eliminating the so-called "middle man" – the Co-ordinating Centers - and reducing the number of field offices.

Today, the Mission and Government have established an extensive planning and implementation mechanism designed to push the Mandate agenda forward. As progress is made, particularly in the areas of civil society development, police reform, and the passage of media and electoral legislation, some adjustments to our present staff of 34 Internationals and 143 nationals will be made. However, the basic structure of the Mission (HQ in Zagreb and six field offices) will remain.

This is necessary to ensure a consistent flow of field-derived information to HQ for discussion and planning across the board with Government Ministries, and to keep in place at the field level sufficient expertise to assist in the implementation and monitoring of projects and programs focusing on remaining mandate issues.

Ambassador Robert W. Becker
Deputy Head of Mission

In the spotlight



Mission members recently collected money to buy the Children's Hospital in Gornja Bistra a much-needed portable oxygen device.



The Sarajevo Process

The heads of the OSCE, UNHCR, and EC Delegations to Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro – the so-called Principals of the Sarajevo process promoting a regional approach to resolving outstanding obstacles to refugee return – met in Belgrade on the 27th of March, almost a year since their last meeting in Zagreb.

Taking stock of the fact that seven of the nine Principals that had met in Zagreb last year had since been replaced, the meeting first aimed at re-acquainting one another on progress to date. The nine Principals then concentrated on the way forward, particularly taking into consideration the delays and problems already encountered on the way.

The main outcome of the meeting resulted in the finalization of a joint letter by the Principals addressed to the Prime Ministers of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the letter, they express their concern at the fact that there still exist open issues preventing the completion of the formulation of individual Road Maps and encouraged their resolution.

Finding a mutually acceptable solution to the problem of terminated occupancy/tenancy rights in the region was given particular attention due to its sensitivity and, in particular, its financial implications. Discussions also revolved around the role the international community is called on to play in the process in accordance with the spirit and wording

of the Sarajevo Declaration, signed by the three countries in January 2005. In this respect, the Principals agreed that although the international community was an active catalyst in the process, local ownership must



Belgrade meeting

be the driving force. They argued that it was essentially up to the individual governments themselves to resolve and come to a consensus on even the most controversial



Sarajevo meeting

issues, such as occupancy/tenancy rights, the exchange of lists of war crimes suspects and earmarking adequate financial commitments from the respective state budgets.

Following the meeting of the nine Principals in Belgrade, the relevant ministers from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro met in Sarajevo on the 31st of March to discuss developments in merging

their individual Road Maps, which each country committed to do with the signing of the Sarajevo Declaration, into a joint matrix. Interestingly, the ministers met in the same conference hall where the Declaration was signed over a year ago.

The final communiqué from the latest meeting highlighted the impasse on several contentious issues, with each country entrenched in their opinion of the way forward. On a more positive note, however, the ministers did renew their overriding commitment to the Sarajevo process. In light of this, the three ministers decided to set up an inter-governmental Task Force to tackle the outstanding, contentious issues stalling the process. The first such meeting took place in Belgrade on the 11th of April and saw the acceptance of several important benchmarks by the three governments. At the moment two contentious issues remain – the recognition of years spent working in former occupied areas of

Croatia; and finding a mutually acceptable solution to the issue of occupancy/tenancy rights. These two issues will be subject to further consultations between the states, with the international community providing an advisory role.

Christian Loda
Head of the Return Unit



Croatian Serbs Petar Reljic and his wife Zorka returned to their newly-reconstructed home in Smokovic, near Zadar, in 2005.



Djuro Basaric returned to his village of Barlete, Gospic. He has yet to move into his war-destroyed house and is temporarily living in his neighbour's house, which was also damaged during the war.



Mission to Croatia a “success story”, says OSCE Secretary General

Ambassador Marc Perrin de Bri-chambaut, the OSCE Secretary General, visited the OSCE Mission to Croatia for the first time on the 29th of March.

The Secretary General joined Mission staff in Zagreb at their regular morning meeting, during which he conveyed the OSCE’s priorities and ongoing reform agenda. He highlighted that the work of the Mission, which he said was considered a “success story”, was held in high regard in Vienna, and that our reporting was of an admirable standard.

During his stay in Croatia, the Ambassador also took the opportunity to meet with leading Croatian officials including President Stjepan Mesic, Head of the Sabor Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Tonino Picula and Serb minority MP, Milorad Pupovac.

President Mesic also praised the Mission’s work and the close co-operation between Croatia and the OSCE. He stated that while some areas of the mandate were close to completion, others required continued attention. As proven by the beginning of EU membership negotiations, the President highlighted that the basic pre-requisites of a fully functioning democracy were now in place, including democratic control over the armed forces (de-politicisation). He stated that Croatia expected an invitation to join NATO and

that relations with neighbouring states were constantly improving.

The Secretary General expressed his gratitude to the Croatian authorities for their co-operation with the Mission, adding that the Mission’s role was to assist the country in moving ahead with commitments it had freely chosen, which in turn would create conditions for faster progress towards its Euro-Atlantic integration. He described the OSCE presence in South-eastern Europe as a grass roots network of field offices working complementarily to build local capacity and stable institutions, whilst promoting respect for human and minority rights.

During his meeting with MP Tonino Picula, the Secretary General stated that the excellent co-operation between Croatia and the Mission was a good example for the region. He depicted the Mission as a group of friends helping Croatia fully meet OSCE commitments. He promoted the idea of the Mid-Term

Review, expected this summer, as a means to evaluate what had been accomplished and what remained to be done, in a spirit of transparency and close co-operation. He noted that further progress was needed with refugee return and consolidation of the rule of law, especially with judicial and police reform.

Mr Picula noted that despite the fact that the Mission had been active since 1996 through different phases of democratic development in the country, together with the fact that the UN had closed two of its Missions (UNTAES and Prevlaka), the transition process in Croatia had not yet finished and that, taking into consideration Croatia’s Euro-Atlantic ambitions, extensive reforms still had to be carried out in all sectors of society. He believed OSCE’s independent observation to be beneficial throughout this period. He noted that the issue of refugee return was no longer political in nature but still had economic and security implications for the country.

Discussing refugee return, MP Milorad Pupovac stated that concrete action was required to remove all remaining obstacles. Here, he noted, the ongoing issue of terminated occupancy/tenancy rights. Mr Pupovac stated that although the Government offered alternative housing to those affected, the programme would not cover all such cases. He added, however, that a substantial number of people had accepted this solution, with over 9000 applications for alternative accommodation already submitted. The Secretary General reiterated that the return of refugees was an important issue for the OSCE.

That evening, Foreign Minister Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic hosted a dinner for the Secretary General.

In an interview for *Jutarnji List*, the Ambassador concluded his visit by saying:

“I am going to leave Croatia with very positive impressions. Our Mission to Croatia is a success story. We have exceptionally good co-operation with the Croatian authorities and we are working on fulfilling our mandate in an atmosphere of trust. This positive advancement will be discussed in Vienna in June when we’ll be discussing the extension of the Mission”.

Mark Fawcett

Head of the Executive Office, MHQ



OSCE Secretary General with HOM, Zagreb, 29 March 2006.

Regional HOMs meeting in Zagreb



The last regional Heads of Missions (HOMs) meeting to be hosted by the Mission was held at Bezanec Castle north of Zagreb in mid-2001. This year, it was once again the turn of the Mission to host this annual gathering. This time, Zagreb Headquarters was chosen as the venue, and we were especially lucky to have the OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, on his first official visit to Croatia (see previous article), join the meeting for the first afternoon.

The meeting assembled each of the six HOMs from the OSCE's Field Missions in Southeastern Europe, and was chaired by the Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre Director, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier. Also present were various officials from the Secretariat, including the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, Bernard Snoy; the Senior Security Adviser, Declan Greenaway, and Senior Police Adviser, Kevin Carty. Representatives from OSCE institutions - the High Commissioner for National Minorities and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

(ODIHR) - joined from Warsaw. Another constructive feature at this meeting was the strong engagement of the incumbent Belgian Chairmanship.

The first day of the two-day meeting focused largely on the latest political developments in the region with attention naturally paid to the crucial start of Final Status Talks in Kosovo, the imminent referendum on Montenegrin independence and the potential impact of both on states in the region. With the Secretary General attending the first afternoon, it was particularly valuable to have a detailed discussion on the ongoing reform agenda in Vienna with an open exchange of views taking place on how



the Organisation operates within the new security architecture in Europe. Talks focused on how Missions manoeuvre within the new Euro-Atlantic aspirations of their host countries. The Senior Police Adviser emphasised the importance of policing in

conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation and in the fight against organised crime while the Chairmanship pointed to the norm-setting and practical aspects of the OSCE in this field.

Other issues intricately related to the reform of the OSCE were discussed, including the role and responsibility of three Vienna-based Working Groups set up to i) strengthen the effectiveness of the OSCE institutions and field operations; ii) strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of OSCE activities; and iii) consider ways of further improving professionalism of OSCE personnel and management of its human resources.

On the second day, agenda items considered included the future of OSCE Missions in Southeastern Europe and the intensification of interaction with other international organizations. Particular emphasis was placed on the different regional initiatives in which the Missions were involved, namely the '3x3' regional refugee return strategy as part of the Sarajevo Declaration and the "Palic process" on inter-state co-operation on war crimes proceedings.

On the latter initiative, the discussion centred on the requirement to give political support in each of the three capitals (Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb) to move the process forward as the working level discussions had reached the limit of their competences.

On the '3x3' process, Ambassador Fuentes briefly outlined the meeting held at the beginning of the same week in Belgrade, where the three OSCE HOMs from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro met with their international colleagues from UNHCR and the EC (the so-called "9 Principals"). They agreed on the text of a letter to be sent to the three Prime Ministers calling for the implementation of the Sarajevo Declaration to close politically the refugee file as envisaged in the Declaration.

ODIHR staff updated participants on their engagement in election related activities, from full scale election observation Missions, to the upcoming referendum in Montenegro.

Mark Fawcett
Head of the Executive Office, MHQ

Minority Rights

Minorities in Croatia a “national treasure”, says Deputy PM

On the 17th and 18th of March, the Government Office for National Minorities and the National Council for National Minorities organized a national seminar on the current status of local and regional councils for national minorities (CNMs). Although established as elected advisory bodies by the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities, in many cases these local councils have yet to be recognized as institutional partners by local authorities.

Co-sponsored by the Mission, the national seminar concluded a series of four regional ‘best practice’ seminars in Rijeka, Osijek, Split and Zagreb. Deputy Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor attended the national event along with other state officials, minority parliamentarians and approximately 90 CNM representatives from across the country.

Opening the seminar, Deputy PM Kosor said “the Government regards Croatia’s 22 minorities as a national treasure” and intends to create the conditions necessary for their full participation in the decision-making process at all levels. As such, she assured those present that the Government would pay attention to the seminar’s conclusions.

In a complimentary address, the Head of Mission remarked that Croatia’s legal framework for protecting minority rights could be considered a model in Central and South-Eastern Europe. He said that Croatia deserved praise for granting its 22 minorities a set of political and cultural rights that required

substantial economic support. However, he noted that dialogue between Croatia’s 250 local minority councils and their local authority counterparts needed to be stimulated further.

Underlining the complexity of local minority representation, Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS) MP, Milorad Pupovac, called the work of local councils “pioneering.” While warning that it would take time before CNMs become fully operational, he pointed to a growing public awareness regarding minority issues.

Following three lively workshops on ‘the role of minority councils in the decision-making process,’ ‘the material functioning of minority councils’ and ‘the merging of minority and local elections,’ conclusions were drawn up in a final plenary session. These included a call for central-level instructions specifying minimum funding and working relations between councils and local authorities; a call for co-ordinations of councils to be given legal personality; a call to align the election date for minority councils with the next local elections in 2009. It was also agreed that upgrading



the operational capacity of national-level bodies involved in supporting minority councils would be beneficial to all.

Olga Roberts,
Political and Reporting Officer

“A marriage based on lies and deceit”

“Journalists and politicians in the Sisak-Moslavina County live in a marriage based on lies and deceit,” said a local journalist during a discussion held at Field Office Sisak in March on “Local Authorities and the Media“. This statement very clearly describes the particularly troublesome relationship between the local media and local authorities.

During an open and constructive discussion between the 20 local journalists that attended the discussion and the Sisak-Moslavina County Prefect, the Mayor of Kutina and Sisak Deputy Mayor, it was agreed that a communication problem exists.

“Instead of being open and transparent, they (the local authorities) offer us filtered information, which is usually only partially correct and never on time,” a *Jutarnji List* journalist said, adding that local authorities purposefully prevent the free flow of information.

The Sisak Deputy Mayor countered this criticism by pointing to the fact that local journalists prefer to report on scandals rather than on the positive projects in the area. He complained that newspaper headlines were often sensational and misconstrues the content of the article.

The Editor-in-Chief of Radio Sisak replied

that although politicians have the right to comment and react to media reports, they do not have the right to label journalists as “mercenaries of the opposition” or “enemies” as has been the case in the past. He added that one of the core problems in the area was the fact that most of the local media in the County was partly or completely owned by local authorities.

“This usually prevents criticism of governing bodies and any difference of opinion is frowned upon,” he concluded.

Julije Katancevic,
National Public Information Officer

Field Office in Focus: Zadar

Minorities in Zadar join forces

Today some 10,000 Zadar County residents have registered themselves as members of an ethnic minority. The seven main ethnic groups in the region being: Albanian, Bosniak, Hungarian, Italian, Macedonian, Slovenian and Serbian, which is the largest minority in Zadar. Following the adoption of the Constitutional Law on National Minorities, councils of national minorities were set up, primarily by the Serb minority, while others have either elected representatives or established minority organizations. In 2005, a county-level co-ordination body of national minorities was set up. FO Zadar works closely with all of them to help make their voices heard. As a result of the OSCE's work, minorities participate in sessions of local government bodies, hold regular meetings with authorities and the police, are members of the Human Rights Committee and

organize, jointly with the OSCE, community meetings.

After realizing the advantages of joining forces, a group of all seven minorities was established in 2005. The group continued to meet regularly with the participation of county and city elected representatives. In the beginning, the meetings served as a platform to identify mutual issues, but now they have developed into a more pro-active role.

The first of two envisaged issues of the "Zadar Bridge of Friendship", a joint magazine of all minorities in Zadar, will be presented to the public in May. Financially supported by the OSCE, the Italian Embassy and Zadar County Administration, the magazine will aim at informing the public, media, and officials of the issues of importance to minorities in Zadar. Another worthy activity planned is the International Day of Cultural Diversity,

set to take place on the 21st of May and hosted by the City of Zadar.

Within the last two years, FO Zadar has noticed a big step forward on this issue, even though a lot still remains to be done, and learned, on both sides

At a glance:

- The Head of Field Office (FO) Zadar is **Renate Herrmanns**.
- FO Zadar includes one unmanned office in Gracac
- The total number of staff working at FO Zadar is:
 - 4 International Mission Members
 - 8 Local Mission Members
- FO Zadar is responsible for the area of Zadar County and the municipality Lovinac in the Lika/Senj County
- The County, with six towns and 27 municipalities, has a 40 km border with the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and an 80 km international sea boundary.
- Today, FO Zadar's area of responsibility includes approx. 200,000 inhabitants, of which around 80% live in coastal areas.
- The city of Zadar is the economic, administrative and political centre of Zadar County, which covers around 6.5% of Croatian territory and counts among the five most prosperous counties.



The FO Zadar team, December 2005

Beauty and the Beast

Zadar's beautiful coastline - only 3km from desolate war-affected areas

Driving from Zagreb to Zadar it is easy to concentrate on the beautiful landscape and ignore the war-affected areas, which are only a few kilometres away from the historic coastal town. Here the stunned visitor will still find devastated ghost-like villages and many destroyed areas.

Although the reconstruction and repossession of Serb-owned properties are nearly completed or well underway, the communal infrastructure in the areas, which is the base for "normal" living conditions, is still lacking. Hence young families find it difficult to return and revive the villages. Added to this is the problem of mines left over from the war. Many areas are inhabitable because

they are believed to be mine infested.

It is encouraging, however, that local authorities – both at the county and city level - recognize that the revival of the hinterland is vital for the further development of the County.

It is our hope that in the near future, visitors to Zadar will not only be able to enjoy the beautiful coastland and surrounding islands but also the bountiful hinterland, with its rich nature, culture, historic sites and hopefully 'thriving' villages. And maybe, the OSCE Field Office in Zadar will be proud of its contribution in facilitating the development of these areas.

Renate Herrmanns, HFO Zadar

Photo Gallery

Visits to MHQ



Photo: Hrvojka Dokoza

Above: President of the Croatian Peoples' Party (HNS) and Deputy Parliament Speaker, Vesna Pusic, discussed political reform and trends in Croatia, 27 January 2006.



Photo: Davor Grgicevic

Above: Minority rights and refugee return were issues discussed during the visit of Serb minority MP Milorad Pupovac to MHQ, 14 February 2006.



Photo: Nikolina Baltija

Above: During her visit to MHQ, Belgium Ambassador Marie-Jehanne Roccas discussed the priorities of the Belgian chairmanship of the OSCE, 7 March 2006.



Photo: Nikolina Baltija

Above: Mladen Stanic, the head of the Croatian research institute for international relations, IMO, discussed Croatia's international standing and efforts in joining the EU, 16 March 2006.



Photo: Hrvojka Dokoza

Above: Justice Minister Ana Lovrin confirmed Croatia's commitment to judicial reforms and applauded the OSCE's assistance in this area, 24 March 2006.



Photo: Davor Grgicevic

Above: OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut during his first visit to MHQ, 29 March 2006.