

SPEECH OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE at the Inaugural Session of the House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mr. Presidents,
Esteemed Parliamentarians,
Dear Guests,

Today is an important day in the history of your country – Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today is the first day in the rest of your history.

Your country – and the region you are a part of – has a history richer than many other parts of Europe and the world. You have been the meeting place of cultures, religions, trade routes and political ambitions for many centuries. You have proud traditions.

But your country has also been the scene of brutal and tragic conflicts. Here, the war ended less than one year ago. It was the most bitter and the most brutal war on the continent of Europe since 1945.

Now your task is to build the peace. Build the common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Build the structures of the Federation as well as of the Republika Srpska. Work for the good of each and everyone in your country.

Many parliamentarians around the world have cause to envy you. Theirs are often days of routine along established patterns. Yours will be days of creating something that is new. You have an opportunity given to few parliamentarians to take decisive historical steps for the good of your country.

What divides you is well known. You represent different political parties and philosophies. You come from different parts of the country and have different cultural backgrounds. Many of you fought against each other during the bitter years of war.

You have been divided by your past. But you must be united by your future.

What you must do during the next two years is what many other peoples in Europe and the world have already done. Look more to the future than to the past. Overcome the divisions and the animosities of war.

Since 1945 reconciliation and integration have brought peace to larger and larger areas of Europe. The enemies of yesterday have become the partners of today with a common vision for tomorrow. Many problems remain to be overcome. But the past is nowhere allowed to block the future.

The Peace Agreement and the Constitution set out your future. A united country – but not a unitary one. The Federation and the Republika Srpska with all the powers which are for them. Absolute respect for the human rights of each and everyone. Democracy. Justice. The right to private property and private enterprise. No barriers and borders.

The world is changing rapidly. Old political and social systems have tumbled down. Freedom and democracy are gaining ground everywhere. Borders and barriers are being dismantled in Europe and throughout the world as new possibilities are opened up. New technologies are creating vast new opportunities for billions of people around the world.

There is a new world waiting for the new Bosnia which is emerging from the Peace Agreement.

Waiting not least for its children. Many of them have suffered beyond belief. Lost their fathers and mothers or brothers and sisters. Been scarred for life by the brutalities of war.

Your responsibility is for the future. For the future of the children and their children who will be citizens of Bosnia, of Europe and of the world.

Two years from now you will be facing the voters again. They will ask what you have done for them. But even more

important – they will ask how effectively you have faced up to your responsibility for the future, for the children, for what your country can and must be.

The international community is here to help and assist you in overcoming the tragedies of the past and building a better future. And our commitment to the peace and development of your country is not limited to this year. In the next few months, we will seek to work out jointly with you the steps we must take to consolidate the peace during the coming two years.

To solve the economic and social problems. Rebuild the houses. Start the factories. Repair the farms. Open the schools. Give support to all those old or handicapped or in need of help.

You have to take the decisions. But we will help along the way.

In the name of all of us who have come from the far corners of the world to help you win your peace and your future, I congratulate you on being elected. I envy you for important tasks ahead of you. I urge you to work together for the future that your children and your grandchildren deserve. I pledge our continued co-operation and help.