

Speech by the High Representative at the signing of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia, Elysée Palace

Presidents,
Prime Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

War has finally come to an end in Bosnia, and from today we are starting the process of building a true peace.

Today, Bosnia is a shattered, divided country, torn apart by the most brutal war in Europe during my generation.

Gradually, we must start to create the conditions for bringing back together what must come back together for peace to last and for justice to be created for each and everyone – Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat. This must be a country for all of them.

We all know that this will be far from easy.

Military implementation is the key to stopping the war and preventing it from restarting again. But it is political, civilian, humanitarian and economic implementation that is the key to building that true peace that the peoples of Bosnia have been longing for.

The tasks that we are jointly facing are as difficult as they are demanding.

To make it possible for the millions of peoples that have been displaced to start returning home or to their places of choosing. To supervise the holding of new elections to the new common political institutions, in all of Bosnia as well as in the Federation and the Republika Srpska. To start the process of rebuilding a shattered economy. To safeguard human rights for each and everyone. To build regional stability, not primarily by more arms, but preferably by fewer arms in the region.

This must be done by the peoples and leaders of Bosnia. It is their country. It is their peace. It is their future.

Our task is to help, to facilitate and to assist. And that we will do with all the determination that we all together – the countries of Europe, the United States, Russia, the United Nations, all those assembled here today – can and will mobilize in order to make peace work.

True peace can never be built without genuine reconciliation, and nothing is as difficult after a brutal war as reconciliation. Not to forget, and not necessarily to forgive, but to think far more about the better future than about the bitter past.

France and Germany have joined hands over the battlefields of Verdun. The history of European cooperation and unification is the history of reconciliation.

Not forgetting the past. But concentrating on building the future. Making the enemies of yesterday into the partners of tomorrow.

This will have to come to Bosnia and to all of the countries of former Yugoslavia as well. Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka are as much part of our common Europe as are Paris, Stockholm or Moscow.

Today we start to work to build a better European future for all of the peoples of Bosnia and for all of the peoples of this troubled part of our continent.