

Remarks by the High Representative, Lord Ashdown, at the Memorial Ceremony on the Sixth Anniversary of the Helicopter Crash

We are here to pay tribute to twelve men and women – five of them from the Office which I am now privileged to lead – who gave their lives in the service of peace in this country.

This ceremony has become – rightly – an annual occasion.

Each year, we journey to this remote and timeless spot to remember our colleagues.

Each year, we renew our commitment to honour their memory in the way we know best, in the way they would surely have wanted us to – by continuing to build a better future for this country.

There is a famous epitaph inscribed in the cold stone memorials of Commonwealth War Cemeteries which reads:

'When you go home, tell them of us, and say: For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

This morning, we honour twelve men and women of goodwill from many lands, who gave their lives in the service of a better tomorrow for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is now six years since that helicopter crash, six years in which the work they started has continued, day in day out, as we have solemnly pledged every year that it would.

I found myself wondering this morning: how would they think we had done, if they could be with us now?

I hope and believe that they would not be disappointed with what has been achieved – and is being achieved – in their name and in their memory. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a very different country today than it was six years ago. Indeed in some respects the progress that has been made is little short of miraculous.

So let us take heart from that fact, and let us rededicate ourselves to our task, in their memory, and in memory of all those who have given their lives in the service of peace. I am thinking in particular of those killed recently in the bombing of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad, many of whom had previously served here in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This country, slowly but surely, is becoming a stable, peaceful place. It truly is building a brighter future from the rubble of its tragic past. There can be no better memorial to those we honour today than that simple fact, and no greater cause than completing the work which they began.