

Remarks by High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko at a Ceremony Marking the Twelfth Anniversary of the Helicopter Crash at Prokosko Lake

Tolerance and Hope Will Prevail

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The great Italian anti-fascist writer Ignazio Silone visiting Galilee with his wife in the early 1960s described the barren but beautiful countryside there as – and I quote – “the landscape of my soul”.

For all of us there is a landscape of the soul – places that the heart recognizes not simply through physical characteristics but through their spiritual and emotional significance.

We are here on this mountainside to remember the sacrifice that was made by twelve men and women who came to Bosnia and Herzegovina to build peace. The country around us is beautiful, but there is a different and more powerful beauty within the landscape.

In the mountains of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the villages and fields and city streets, in the farmhouses and office blocks and apartment buildings there is a reality that is distinct from the physical surroundings – a landscape of the soul. It is a landscape of generosity, of solidarity, of compassion, of tolerance and of hope.

And, as in every country, that landscape is constantly assailed by an alternative reality – of meanness, and stupidity, and indifference, and hatred, and despair.

Twelve people died on this mountainside so that the landscape of hope would not be overwhelmed.

Well, it hasn't been overwhelmed.

And it isn't going to be overwhelmed.

I believe this. I believe with every fibre of my being that the good in this country will prevail – because the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have a God-given strength and wisdom that transcends the limitations of their political system and their political leadership.

The landscape of this country's soul is infused with love not hate, it is informed by generosity not meanness, it is sustained by hope not beaten down by despair. And that fact has been borne out even in the last two dreadful decades – because the political and moral incompetents who unleashed and perpetrated violence tried to bring a majority of citizens down to their own level, and in this they conspicuously failed.

Peter Backes, Livio Beccaccio, Andrzej Buler, David Kriskovich, Leah Melnick, Charles Morpeth, William Nesbitt, Marvin Padgett, Thomas Reinhardt, Jurgen Schauf, Georg Stiebler and Gerd Wagner gave their lives, as have tens of thousands of others, to protect the landscape of this country's soul.

These deaths are not meaningless. Good will prevail. Of this I am certain.

We go from this mountainside with renewed confidence that compassion and tolerance and love will triumph – and in the most unpromising circumstances, when it seems that stupidity and self-interest have gained the upper hand, we will survey the inner landscape and we will see that the power of good is, as it has always been and always will be, greater than the power of evil.