

16 Years of Dayton: A Dramatic Change Is Required

Today we mark the 16th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement which brought an end to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and provided BiH with the constitutional and political framework to progress towards full integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Unfortunately, however, the potential of Dayton's constitutional framework to provide stability to the country and prosperity to its citizens is not being realized. Instead, BiH politicians continue to show little willingness to compromise, bringing stagnation rather than progress. Some political representatives from across BiH continue to challenge the peace agreement. The failure to elect a State Government or adopt a 2011 State budget demonstrate that, sixteen years after the parties initialled the peace agreement in Dayton, the job in Bosnia and Herzegovina is far from complete.

The current political situation threatens the country's democratic institutions, slows down the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, and damages the economy.

The High Representative has made clear that the progress that has been achieved in implementing the Peace Agreement will not be reversed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, nonetheless, can still look to the future with optimism. EU and NATO accession remain realistic prospects with the potential to stimulate positive change. The International Community will remain a reliable partner in achieving the goal of strong and functional entities within a strong and functional state.

To realize these objectives, however, a dramatic change is required – one which starts with the BiH political leadership. They must start showing willingness to compromise and put the needs of the citizens first, above narrow political interests.

In the next year, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve to see this negative trend reversed, and the forging of a common vision and common priorities for the future of the country. They deserve a country which can solve its own problems institutionally and move convincingly towards integration in the Euro-Atlantic institutions.