

Remarks by Principal Deputy High Representative Larry Butler at the Peace Support Operations Training Center

BiH Today and the Challenges of Tomorrow

Since I took up my position as Principal Deputy High Representative in March 2005 I have made a point of speaking to this particular gathering – because what you are accomplishing here is directly connected to what we at the OHR and in the broader International Community are seeking to accomplish, together with our BiH partners.

The development of a new and distinctive role for the BiH armed forces is a fundamental element in the country's overall recovery.

The PSOTC course, with its multinational participation and orientation towards the military demands of the post-Cold War world, reflects the new challenges that face the military in BiH today.

In the last three to four years the BiH armed forces have instituted basic changes – in troop strength, military doctrine, strategic thinking, and equipment provision. The object of this comprehensive and ambitious exercise has been to create a military structure that meet the needs – and corresponds with the resources – of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

And in the course of the same period the country's needs and resources have themselves changed in basic ways.

This, then, is an extremely complex process, and the sophisticated training models that are being applied in the PSOTC course are important elements in this process.

The modern military can only function effectively if officers are fully conversant with modern strategic and managerial techniques.

Now, the theme of today's discussion is "BiH Today and the Challenges of Tomorrow". This is an exceptionally opportune moment to address this theme – because we are just a month away from what will be a watershed general election.

Today and tomorrow – metaphorically if not literally – are likely to be very different.

The elections will reconfigure the political landscape and set in place the basic building blocks with which the leaders of this country will have to work for the next four years.

If these building blocks are set in place in the most constructive ways then there will be a huge opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina to make real and substantial progress – most importantly, progress towards the twin goals that practically every citizen of BiH fervently wants to attain: membership of the European Union and membership of NATO.

Clearly, the armed forces themselves will make a direct contribution to ensuring that the second of these goals is attained. Instituting standards of leadership, battle-readiness and overall professionalism in the armed forces so that these are consistent with NATO requirements is a task that falls to every BiH officer in this room.

The military advantages of participation in PfP and, eventually, NATO membership are clear. I certainly don't have to spell them out, particularly in a gathering such as this.

But none of us should underestimate the *political* and *psychological* implications of progress along the NATO membership path.

Every step forward on this path represents a step away from the uncertainty that has been a diminishing but

persistent and damaging legacy of the conflict of the early 1990s.

That uncertainty has been a major obstacle in the broader recovery process. Notions (often thoroughly ill-informed notions) of country risk – I think my colleagues from the World Bank will agree – have hampered the development of confidence in the BiH economy that is prerequisite of sustained growth.

A good business climate – the sort of climate that will allow Bosnia and Herzegovina to attract the investment it desperately needs in order to create tens of thousands of new jobs – a good business climate can only be established and maintained if basic questions of military security are satisfactorily addressed.

And the reform of the BiH armed forces during the last three or four years effectively addresses these questions.

So each and every one of you is playing a key role in the postwar recovery of Bosnia and Herzegovina – well beyond the purely military sphere.

It's not stretching things too far to say that new and higher standards of military training directly contribute to the creation of new jobs – they are all part of the same interconnected process.

As I mentioned when I spoke to this group last year, modernizing the armed forces isn't simply another box to be "ticked off" in the succession of reforms that are taking BiH back into the European mainstream.

The Armed Forces have a particular and profound importance for citizens. In a very tangible way the armed forces represent the country.

Your success will be viewed as the success of Bosnia and Herzegovina . It is therefore crucially important that you succeed.

I need hardly add that that this success is also crucially important for each of you on a personal level. In the post-conscription era your career is not a mandatory civic obligation but an individual life choice.

At the same time, the *country* needs the advanced skills that military officers can bring when they return to the civilian work force.

So your success and that of Bosnia and Herzegovina are doubly intertwined.

Let me conclude by expressing my appreciation to Brigadier General Henning Larsen, Colonel Paul Kellett and the staff of the Peace Support Operations Training Centre for the work they are doing here. It is work that will bring invaluable dividends to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thank you