

# New Opportunities of SAA Phase Built on Dayton Foundations

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been able to move from the political and economic collapse of a decade ago to the beginning of EU accession talks in coming days because the Dayton Agreement combined “enough firmness to maintain peace, with enough flexibility to enable reform,” the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown said today at an international conference on BiH held in Dayton, Ohio.

“A key lesson has been that political settlements are not – cannot be – written in stone,” the High Representative said. He noted that the Dayton process had evolved under the effective security umbrella provided first by NATO and then by EUFOR and that the process had worked because it had adapted to meet successive challenges – the Bonn Powers have cut through “thickets of obstructionism”, while economic and political provisions that have been found to be unworkable or impossibly wasteful have been rationalised through pragmatic consensus.

This has allowed BiH to move from basic peace implementation, through postwar recovery, to the beginning of the EU accession process.

“BiH as it stood at the start of this decade was still a long way from meeting modern European norms in regard to political representation, civil rights, ease of access to legal redress and basic administrative efficiency,” the High representative said. “The model of creating the basic institutions of a light-level state, governing a highly decentralized country has evolved through the Dayton Process. In constructing this model we have sought to take BiH to a destination that, by a

huge margin, the majority of its citizens want to reach. To move irreversibly on course to effective statehood, and onto the path that leads to the EU and to NATO.”

The High Representative said the last decade had been a long hard struggle for the citizens of BiH, who have “often had to put up with hardship that could have been avoided if their political leaders had shown greater imagination and greater wisdom.” However, he added that, latterly, politicians had “mustered the necessary courage and creativity to overcome the remaining obstacles.”