

BiH Must Be Ready For The Next Phase

A decade after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina the Dayton peace agreement has brought BiH to the gateway to the Stabilisation and Association Process and to Partnership for Peace, "but are reaching the end of the utility of the Dayton construct; the end of the phase where the in-built flexibilities of Dayton are sufficient to cope with what will have to be a less ad hoc, more functional programme of institutional change," the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, said today.

Addressing the *next* phase of BiH's development the High Representative said "we in the International Community must now begin to move from the heavyweight, intrusive interventions, to a new role of adviser, persuader and partner under a European Union Special Representative."

Stabilisation and Association negotiations with the European Union, scheduled to begin in the middle of next month, mean that Bosnia and Herzegovina is now better positioned than it has ever been to chart a new strategic path. "We have used the flexibilities within Dayton to create the broad superstructures of a light level state structure, governing a highly decentralized country, " the High Representative noted, but he emphasised that "it is now necessary to begin to recognize and correct two main downsides of the Dayton Peace agreement; first, reliance on group, rather than individual rights, and second, the burden of a highly dysfunctional structure of governance.

" Dayton encouraged, and has preserved what was, in wartime, a means of survival. The basic European principle lies in the fact that an individual's rights are protected individually. BiH's systems [and] government...are based on the idea that an

individual's rights are...protected within the group." Unless changed, this could block progress on the European road, he said.

The cost of Government in BiH impoverishes its people and stagnates its economy and must be reduced. Functionality is the key word for the next phase. "The state-building task now is to make the state institutions we have recently created function effectively and make the state as a whole function more effectively," said the High Representative.

The High Representative was speaking at a roundtable on the 10th Anniversary of Dayton, organized by the Bosnian Institute in London . The full text of his remarks is available on the OHR's website.