Remarks by the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown at a Ceremony Marking the Eighth Anniversary of the Helicopter Crash at Prokosko Lake

The immutable beauty of this landscape – sky and mountaintop, God's grandeur – reflects our purpose today.

This morning we honour the memory of 12 men and women who gave their lives eight years ago – for this country, in this place.

The passage of time does not diminish their sacrifice, or our solemn duty to honour it.

Those whom we remember today set off on their last helicopter flight – across mountainous terrain in bad weather. They were not merely going through the motions of professional duty; they were prepared to take their commitment beyond that. They were prepared to risk their own physical safety.

The mission in which they were engaged involved making real the possibilities of this country – the possibility of peace, the possibility of inclusive democracy, the possibility of security and sustenance for each man, woman and child in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We have come here to honour their memory and to renew our commitment.

We would *dis*honour their memory if, with the passing years, we were to abandon those possibilities, if we were to let party interest and selfishness triumph over the kind of society and

the kind of country that Bosnia and Herzegovina still can be.

We have come a very long way in the last eight years. We now stand at a crossroads. We must take the right path. We can only do that if the ideal for which these men and women died is made to prevail.

I believe that it *will* prevail – because truth, like the stones and the stark beauty that surround us now, endures all things, and triumphs in the end.

We honour the memory of Leah Melnick, Charles Morpeth, Thomas Reinhardt, Jurgen Schauf and Gerd Wagner, from the OHR, and Peter Backes, Livio Beccaccio, Andrzej Buler, David Kriskovich, William Nesbitt, Marvin Padgett, and Georg Stiebler from UNMIBH. We will honour their memory in the most valuable way by completing the work – making permanent peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina – for which they made the ultimate sacrifice.