

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference

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IRC Speech

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, was in London today to give a keynote speech at the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) annual lecture. On the eve of world refugee day, the High Representative used this opportunity to highlight the progress that had been made in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in the seven and a half years since the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed. In his speech the High Representative outlined the 'seven pillars of peacekeeping', lessons that can be learned from BiH.

Noting that the world's attention has moved on from BiH to Kosovo, East Timor, Afghanistan and now Iraq, in his speech the High Representative warns the International Community of the dangers of not showing the "political will, the unity of purpose and the sheer stamina...to see the job through to lasting success". This need for long-term commitment was the last of 'seven pillars of peace keeping', which sum up the lessons learned from the BiH experience.

In his speech the High Representative explained each of these seven principles – some of which had been painful lessons in BiH

- First, a state building plan must be drawn up, "not as an after-thought, but well in advance...in BiH, we had no such plan for civil reconstruction, it is only in the last few months that we have finally drawn up a Mission Implementation Plan, setting out clearly what we are trying to achieve, how and by when."
- Second, the rule of law must be established as quickly as possible, "before crime and corruption infects every sector of political life choking off resources and threatening its chances of recovery."
- Third, it is vital to go in hard from the start; "on the military side, this means establishing credibility straight away, and on the civilian side, that means starting off with the powers needed to get the job, done rather than having to acquire them later."
- Fourth, "major reforms – from putting in place a customs service or reliable tax base, to reforming the police and the civil service, to restructuring and screening the judiciary, to transforming the armed forces" are essential to long-term success.
- Fifth, the IC presence must be such that it can take decision in the field, "in BiH [OHR is] an ad hoc arrangement that works well."
- Sixth, there must be an "exceptionally close relationship between the military and civilian aspects of peace implementation".
- Finally, the will to stay the course to achieve a political goal; "for Iraq, that may be a democratic and prosperous state in a peaceful and secure Middle East, for Bosnia, it is Europe".

In his speech the High Representative underlines that this final point is the message that he will take to the EU Summit on the Western Balkans in Thessaloniki on Saturday. He said "Europe bears a special responsibility in the Balkans, we must help determine the region's future". He underlined that this "will require leadership, continued financial commitments on a substantial scale [and] maintaining political interest".

In concluding his speech, the High Representative says: the International Community has made its mistakes here, the challenge in BiH now is to finish what we have started.

Speech can be found outside on the tables outside but please have in mind that is embargoed for the publication by 19.00 hours.

Thessalonica summit and meeting the Pope

During the final legs of his ten-day tour the High Representative will tomorrow be in Thessaloniki for Saturday's EU Summit on the Western Balkans where he will lobby for BiH. The Thessaloniki summit is an important opportunity for BiH to demonstrate to the EU that it is determined to undertake the necessary reforms. EU membership offers the best prospects for long-term prosperity and stability for BiH, but when BiH joins the EU depends on BiH and the pace of its reforms.

It is up to BiH, as up to all potential candidates for EU membership, to meet the standards required and to show that it shares the values upon which the EU is founded. The faster it does so, the more rapidly it can make progress on the road to Europe, as several of its neighbors have demonstrated already.

The end of the High Representatives tour will be on Sunday June 22, when he will meet the Pope in Banja Luka.