

Speech by the High Representative, Carlos Westendorp, at the opening ceremony of Dom Zdravlja in Rogatica

It is very fitting that I should be here today at the opening of Dom Zdravlja in a group which includes prime minister Milorad Dodik and his colleagues, and fellow representatives from the European Union (on the occasion of Portugal's national day).

Earlier this week an important step forward was taken with the signing by EU ministers of a declaration on special relations with BiH: it is my firm belief that the closer the ties we forge with Europe for BiH, the better we maintain the peace and stability of the past two years 1998 will be remembered as the year when the Republika Srpska became a full partner in this process. Europe will reach out to both entities and all peoples of this country as long as both support a future based on the guiding principles of European nations: democracy, respect for Human rights, the rule of law and freedom to develop market economies free of corruption and mismanagement.

Prime minister Dodik and his government continue to express support for each of these principles. You are all beginning to see, and will see increasingly in the coming months, substantial financial support flowing in recognition of this.

So it is of symbolic importance that we should be here today representing the international community, the EU and the RS government to open the hospital – Dom zdravlja – which AMI

(the Portuguese NGO) and ECHO have co-financed.

The hospital is one in series of internationally supported projects in the Rogatica municipality in the last 2 years houses, the health centre, the school and the water system have been rehabilitated.

But these projects are just a tiny part of the economic reconstruction aid now earmarked to flow into the RS in the next two months \$25 million will be spent on projects in the Republika Srpska on projects designed to improve the quality of life of citizens hospitals schools water systems electricity and road repair will be crucial parts of this in eastern RS alone a total of \$ 56 million is currently being spent on ongoing projects since 1997 earlier this year I fought hard to increase the share of aid going to the RS. I am now seeing encouraging signs that in the eastern parts of the RS, political change deserves to be rewarded by further aid commitments this year.

What happens in the coming months in municipalities like Rogatica is key to what happens in BiH as a whole. As with much of the post- war landscape of BiH, refugees and displaced persons must be able to return to their homes here if they so wish.

Enterprise must be regenerated so that jobs can be created.

Commitments to pluralism, human rights and ethnic re-integration must be met here. If Rogatica can commit to concrete measures in each of these areas, it will undoubtedly continue to be a priority area for assistance.

I reported this week to foreign ministers in Luxembourg that in the last six months we have seen the introduction of a flag, a passport and common licence plates for BiH. Next week the

Konvertible Marka will be officially launched as the new

currency of BiH. I also reported to ministers that with laws on investment, customs and privatisation, now being implemented, BiH is opening itself to trade and investment with Europe and beyond.

But on a less positive note, I also reported that our achievements here are fragile. If you the people do not avail of today's opportunities to build political institutions and develop a market economy, you will not be given another chance.

I am confident that you will not give your support to leaders who squabble with each other and ignore the basic and fundamental needs of their people or your country cannot emerge from the suffering of the past. Your people cannot live just on nationalism: they need security. They need jobs. They need a future for them and their children.

I am sure that you will not pay attention to biased and embittered media on your airwaves, because you want to know the truth, you need to know of the opportunities which lie beyond enclaves and entities.

I am certain that you will not allow your children's' teachers to distort the past and to educate a new generation in hatred of their neighbour, because you want them to grow and embrace the BiH of tomorrow, under the guidance of wider Europe.

These are themes I hold close to my heart. As I visit the towns and villages of Republika Srpska, I want you to know that we plan to work together – we must work together – and quickly – to use the support now present here in the country. SFOR will remain for the time being; elections will give you all a chance to vote for the leaders you need; financial aid will continue; and the institutions of law and government will be strengthened. This is what we in the international community can do.

I call on you to take the chances we offer, to work with us

and with your democratically elected government in looking forward – not backwards – to achieve these goals.