

Farewell TV Address by the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt

In the late spring of 1995, I was asked if I was ready to put everything aside and work for peace in Bosnia. It was said to be a hopeless task. But I said yes. Everything must be done to stop the war. In my own country, I had seen the despair of the many tens of thousands of refugees coming. From Prijedor. From Foca. From Mostar. From Sarajevo.

More than two years have passed. I will go back to my own country. I have obligations there I can no longer put aside. Not least to my own children.

Bosnia today is a country where peace is gradually taking hold. Every day of peace is a possibility to make things better. But we all know that Bosnia today is also a country which has a long way to go until there is real and lasting and true peace. Many are uncertain of what the future will bring.

Let me say three things as I leave.

- The international community will never tolerate a new war. It will not happen.
- The international community will never tolerate the break-up of Bosnia. It will not happen.
- The international community will never tolerate a Bosnia only dominated by one group or one people. It will not happen.

These three important messages – taken together – make up the message that the Peace Agreement is the only road ahead.

To speculate about war or secession or domination is not only to waste time and opportunities, it is to damage the prospects for peace. The main responsibility for solving the problems of your country rests with you and your leaders.

A few days ago I was walking in a small village high up on the slopes above Sarajevo. And was invited – as always in this hospitable country – for coffee. Why, did they ask, isn't our water system working a year and a half after the end of the war? And wherever I go, these are the questions. In Drvar. In Banja Luka. In Trebinje. In Zenica. Why has not more been done to start solving the economic and social problems of the country?

What Bosnia need is not more nationalist speeches.

What you – Croats or Serbs or Muslims of Bosnia – need is not speeches, but water that works, electricity that is reliable, a roof over the head, a school for your children, a wage or a pension to be able to live.

And what you need is politics which deals with the future far more than with the past. The past has already happened – the future is yours to decide.

The sufferings brought by the war have been horrible.

But there is only a future for Bosnia – for your children and their children and the generations to come – if you can look more to the future than to the past. A future which is not a repetition of the past.

Nations throughout Europe have overcome war and divisions. Germans and French have united over the battlefields of Verdun. Poles and Russians have united after the massacres of Katyn.

And today you see the soldiers of armies which once were enemies – Americans and Russians, French and Germans – working together as friends for peace here in your country.

What others have done, you can do.

Jasenovac. Srebrenica. The horrors of the past can not divide for ever. Those responsible must be punished – and they will. But you must move forward in overcoming the fears of the past.

I have one message to your political leaders – be they in Bosnia, in the Federation, in the Republika Srpska:

Stop blaming each other, and stop blaming the international community, for what has not been done.

The political leaders should instead blame themselves every hour, every day they have not taken a step towards reconciliation, towards peace, towards solving all the problems of ordinary people.

There is so much to be done. There is no time to be lost.

I will now leave Bosnia and go back to my own country. My successor – Carlos Westendorp – will take over. But I will never really leave Bosnia. I have come to love your country and many of you.

Many of you have invited me to your houses on my travels across the country. Many of you have shared your sorrows, your fears and your hopes with me during these years.

I will never forget, and I will always do whatever I can to help you all. And most of all your children. They suffered more than any during the war.

And if there is one duty that you all – irrespective of nationality, of religious belief or political persuasion – have – it is to make certain that what happened to them yesterday will never ever happen to them or to their children or to their grandchildren in the future.

ZELIM VAM SRETNU BUDUCNOST