Statement by the High Representative, Carl Bildt at the Ministerial Meeting of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council

One year ago there was a fragile cease-fire in Bosnia as the peace talks at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio were about to enter their third week with the final result still highly uncertain.

It was only in the morning hours of November 21 that it became clear that there was going to be an agreement to be initialled, and it was this Peace Agreement that was signed here in Paris 11 months ago to the day.

Since then Bosnia has come a long way. It is no longer the fighter-bombers, but increasingly the commercial jets, that are circling over Sarajevo and its airports. Life has started to come back to the streets, the villages, the mountain-sides of the country.

The achievements of the past year are obvious to each and everyone. I believe we can say that in broad terms we have achieved what we set out to achieve during this first year of peace implementation. This is no small achievement in view of the bitterness and the brutality of the 42 months of war.

But as we have gone along, we have also become more aware of all that remains to be done. The Peace Agreement is the most ambitious Peace Agreement in modern history. To fulfil all its provisions is a task that even under the best of conditions will stretch over years to come.

This meeting in Paris is an important milestone. It marks the beginning of the end of the first crucial year of peace implementation. And it marks the entry into the two year consolidation period to which we must all commit ourselves.

And what must come out of our meeting today is a double commitment.

A commitment by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to fully implement and respect all parts of the Peace Agreement. No *"ifs"* or *"but's"*. The Peace Agreement is not an a la carte menu where you can choose what you like. It was, is and remains a package deal where full implementation is what counts. To this we expect the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to commit itself fully.

And as a result of this we expect a full commitment by all the countries represented here to support and assist the authorities and peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the next two years in implementing the agreement. This commitment must cover all aspects necessary and must cover the period as a whole.

This double commitment is demanding.

The Presidency – here together in an international forum for the first time – must act together with more resolution than we have seen in the past few weeks. There is no longer time for political trench-warfare over prestige or details – this is the time for political bridge-building and statesmanship for the good of all parts of the country.

The Presidency has failed in its commitment to itself to recommend a Council of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly. I know that you blame each other. But the responsibility for the failure is yours.

You cannot expect the international community – when the despair and desperation of the catastrophe of the Great Lakes

region of Africa is now calling for the attention and action of governments – to go into major military and economic commitments to help you when you are seen as not being able to help yourself in taking even basic decisions on the implementation of the constitution.

It should be a condition for the international community to go forward with its commitment that a functioning Council of Ministers is set up very shortly.

And this is just the beginning. The Presidency, the Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly must then move forward together on a number of issues.

There must be a budget for the state. There must be a commitment to key pieces of legislation. There must be decisions on ambassadors of your country. There must be a commitment to radical economic reforms. You must be ready to take the decision called for in the Constitution on flags and symbols of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

None of this will be easy. But true power-sharing is the key to turning the enemies of yesterday into the partners of tomorrow. No one has the right to block progress. No one has the right to dominate others. It is only by acting together, with the compromises which will be necessary, that you will be able to move forward.

The demands on the international community are no less demanding. There are already signs of a *"Bosnia fatigue"* setting in as new conflicts and crises demand the attention of policy-makers.

There must be a successor force to IFOR in Bosnia during the entire consolidation period, although I am deeply aware of the domestic political difficulties in committing forces for longer periods.

There must be a clear commitment to help with the economic

reconstruction of all of the country. Although the pace is now picking up, *"creative accounting"* has led us into a situation this year where funds available are less than funds talked about, and where insufficient co-ordination of efforts has led to significant under-funding of areas which are absolutely key to the economic recovery of the country.

As the new common institutions are set up – most importantly the Council of Ministers with its key role in these aspects – we must be ready to move forward fast with a dialogue aiming at a successful Donor's Conference. Its timing has already slipped as a result of the delays in the work of the Presidency, but we would hope this will not be for long.

And we must be ready to commit between 2 and 3 billion US dollars to the continued reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the consolidation period. If this is co-ordinated in a proper way, and if there are the economic reforms which will be called for, I believe that there can be a self-sustaining economic growth in the country after the end of the consolidation period.

Three challenges in particular during the consolidation period will require the attention of all of us.

First, the issue of war crimes.

This is an issue which should be dealt with by the International Tribunal. It is to the detriment of the efforts to achieve reconciliation in the country when war crimes-charges are used at random by local courts and by local police in the way we have seen in the course of this year.

But for this to be successful, all must co-operate fully with the Tribunal. This applies to the authorities of the Republika Srpska, to the authorities of the Federation, to the authorities of Yugoslavia and to the authorities of Croatia. There must be a limit on how long the present situation of refusal to comply with the demands of the Tribunal can be

tolerated.

Second, the issue of refugees and displaced persons.

I often meet desperate people when I travel around Bosnia.

Desperate Serbs still living in collective centres due to the refusal of their authorities to accept international help, and now fearing that they will have to move again as refugees are coming back. Desperate Bosniacs looking over the IEBL and seeing the ruins of their former homes but still unable to go there to start to pick up the pieces of their lives back together again. Desperate Croats who feel that they are subject to continuous harassment in areas of the Federation not dominated by them.

This is a desperation that will haunt the political process of the country if there is not the readiness to let people live where they want. All will not wish to go back to wherever they come from. But no one has the right to deny a human being the right to live wherever he wants to.

During next year, these issues will be even more in focus. We need to continue to support the work of the UNHCR. We need to co-ordinate housing reconstruction with refugee return, with the much too slow work of the Real Property Commission, with the procedures now established for the Zone of Separation and with the political bridge-building efforts.

Third, the elections to come: in 1997 the local elections and in 1998 the national and entity elections.

We need to learn from the lessons of this year. Prepare decisions carefully in an open dialogue between all those concerned. Establish a proper voters' register that can reduce the uncertainties of the system. Commit a sufficient number of international supervisors. And make certain that there are procedures for installing into office those elected.

If this is done, these elections will be key contributions to the consolidation period. If not, they risk being destabilising rather than stabilising factors.

As you know, I have repeatedly stressed the need for a wider and longer commitment to the peace process. One year and one country is not enough. But now we are on our way into a longer consolidation period, and now we are on our way towards shaping a proper regional approach to the issues confronting us.

Trade links must be developed. It is trade rather than aid that over time will lift the economies of the families and the regions and the nations.

The right of return for refugees applies across the region. Those now in Croatia or the FRY must have the right to come back if they so wish. And of great importance is that there is speedy progress with return to Croatia of all those who so wish. And we must prevent a new exodus from Eastern Slavonia which could have a most destabilising effect.

The agenda ahead of us is vast. The international community today in Paris will declare its willingness to continue to help and assist. But their efforts are dependent on yours.

Together we have gone from war to the situation we have today. Together we can achieve what might truly deserve the name peace.