Opening remarks by the High Representative at the Rome Meeting on Implementation of the Dayton Agreement

This meeting must send out one clear message: that the peace process is still on course in Bosnia.

The indications I bring from Bosnia itself are somewhat mixed. The military side of the implementation is going broadly in line with the timetable set out in the Peace Agreement, although events of the last days have highlighted the difficulties that are still there. On the streets, there are the first signs of hope that the days of war might be over. I see this in the faces of ordinary people from Sarajevo to Banja Luka, from Gorazde to Gornji Vakuf.

But this confidence is a fragile thing. It will be undermined if leaders from all sides do not participate fully in the process of national reconciliation. This is a commitment placed on them just as seriously as their obligations under the military annexes to withdraw their troops and dismantle their armouries. I am not satisfied that everyone is playing his part to the full.

In the early weeks there was a good start to the work of the joint institutions set up under the Peace Agreement such as the Joint Civilian Commission and the Joint Interim Commission. We had representatives of the entities, from local officials to Prime Minsiters, talking directly together about the problems they faced, both practical and political. But over recent weeks there has been a failure to see this process through. One side has consistently failed to attend formal meetings of these bodies. All sides could do more to rise

fully to the difficulties we were bound to encounter along the way. Much more needs to be done, not least in the media, to change the languages of war to the language of peace.

My main appeal here is therefore to the political leaders of Bosnia itself. They have a duty to return to the table and deliver on the undertakings they made in the Peace Agreement. Non-compliance on the political side like military non-compliance, would carry its costs.

The international community also has a duty to support the process. The attendance here of the Contact Group at the invitation of the EU Presidency shows it is conscious of that duty. There also has to be an economic reconstruction programme to underpin the political reintegration of the country. The prospects will be bleak if armies of soldiers are demobilised only to turn into armies of the unemployed. There has to be a visible peace divident, and in good time for the elections due later this year. My second appeal is therefore to all those nations who have promised assistance to deliver urgently on those promises.

All of Bosnia’s leaders say they want their country to rejoin the international community and to be seen as a part of Europe. This weekend is something of a test for them. Other political leaders from the region will have an important role, and I welcome the presence here in Rome of Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman as well as President Izetbegovic, President Zubak and Prime Minister Kasagic. I say to the Bosnians as I have said before: it is your country, it is your peace, it is your future. My hope is that we can use this weekend to help you to shape that future.