Remarks given at Dayton, by Carl Bildt, European Union High Representative

Let me start by expressing our sincere thanks to not only the Government of the United States, but even more to all of the people here in Dayton and at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, for the hospitality and generosity that we have felt since coming here yesterday.

We are here to seek a just and lasting solution to the most brutal conflict that we have seen in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

The European Union has worked ceaselessly ever since the beginning of the war to bring about a peaceful settlement. A settlement has been close on previous occasions. But the prize of peace proved elusive.

This time the chance must not be allowed to slip. Such an opportunity to end the Bosnian tragedy and the conflict in Croatia will not recur. The efforts here in Dayton is the result of a unique effort that brings together the work of the United States, the countries of the European Union – and in particular Great Britain, France and Germany – and the Russian Federation.

We have learnt through the bitter experiences during these years that it is only by working together that we can have any chance of having success. No one of us can achieve on its own that we can only achieve together.
The United States can not. The European Union can not. Russia can not. It is only by working together that we have a possibility of success.

But at the end of the day peace is never going to be the product of the plans of the Contact Group countries. We can do no more than to facilitate and to help.

There is an enormous responsability on the leaders of the parties here to seize this moment. The European delegations in Dayton, working together with our American and Russian friends, will do everything possible to help the parties achieve a successful outcome. That was the unanimous view of European Union foreign ministers at their meeting in Luxembourg the day before yesterday.

We want to see Bosnia continue as a single, multiethnic and democratic state in which human rights, the rights of minorities and the rights of refugees to return are fully recognized and respected. We want to see mutual recognition among the states of former Yugoslavia, the development of their economies on market principles and on the basis of regional cooperation, and the establishment of a process of arms control.

We Europeans are ready to contribute to the international effort to reconstruct the areas devastated by war once peace is established and to build stability and prosperity in the longer term throughout the region.

Few things have affected me more than the fate of the innocent children caught up in this brutal war. I cannot forget the little girl who, after a grenade fell on the Sarajevo market, turned to her mother and asked where the hands had gone only to see that she has also lost her father.

We owe it to the innocent children. We owe it to the men and women who have brought aid to hundred of thousands Bosnians who might otherwise not have survived. We want to see Bosnia and the other states of former Yugoslavia free of war and joining the European family of nations in peace and prosperity.