Article by the High Representative, Carl Bildt:"Help the Bosnia Parties to Make Dayton Work"

There is scarcely such a thing any more as a truly effective national foreign policy.

Anyone glancing at television news or newspaper headlines over the past few weeks will appreciate just how difficult the process of building peace in Bosnia is.

After 42 months of the most bitter and brutal war that Europe has witnessed since 1945, it could hardly be expected that all the fears, feelings and apprehension would disappear over night. Three months' absence of war has brought but a modest start to the process of reconciliation and reintegration, and has vividly demonstrated how massive the tasks will be for years to come.

The peace agreement concluded in Dayton and signed in Paris is probably the most ambitious document of its kind in modern history. It sets out not only to end the war, but also to reconstruct – on the basis of the highest standards of international law and principles – a society that has been brutally torn apart. The military force sent into separate the armies and establish the new boundary line between the Moslem-Croat Federation and the Republika Serbska has now accomplished this task. But the limitations of military power, when it comes to reintegration and reconciliation, are becoming increasingly apparent every day. Force alone can separate armies, but can never bring the hearts and the minds of politicians and peoples to accept that the enemies of yesterday must be the partners of tomorrow.

In my function as high representative for the implementation of the peace agreement, I have two main concerns.

The first is funding the costs of implementing the civilian and economic aspects of the Dayton agreement. While there are generally provisions for military spending in Bosnia in the the existing defence budgets of individual countries, all of the civilian and economic efforts need separate funding decisions by separate nation states operating according to separate national agendas.

I have been encouraged by the speed with which the European Parliament and the European Commission have moved in supporting my activities and providing quick and substantial aid from EU budgets. Last week's decision by the US Congress to provide a further $145m for economic reconstruction is also welcome. But it is important that other potential contributors take the opportunity of next week's donors' conference in Brussels to match these efforts.

My second concern is the will of the parties to achieve reconciliation and reintegration. Without their will and participation, there will always be limits to what the international community can do with limited resources and within a limited timetable.

So far, I have seen less than enough of that will to achieve the full success of the peace agreement.

The brutal truth is that the unification of Sarajevo has accelerated the division of Bosnia, and that the freedom of movement we have sought to create throughout the territory is challenged almost daily by new checkpoints and by a pattern of arbitrary arrests that make people fear moving across the boundary line between the Federation controlled area and the Bosnian Serb-occupied area. It is particularly provocative to see Mr Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb wartime leader indicted by the International War Crimes Tribunal, trying to

remain in public office.

The conflict in Bosnia is hardly new, and history will most certainly not end with the departure of the Implementation Force at the end of the year. Increasingly, we see the the different parties reassessing their positions in the light of their perceptions of what might happen in the longer perspective. Reintegration and reconciliation is most certainly still an option – one we must do everything we can to support. But there is also a danger of continued ethnic separation and partition.

I am deeply worried by the tendencies in this direction in Bosnia. This could easily be seen as the continuation of a trend that has been apparent throughout this century. But it is a trend that, in the long run, can only bring further conflict to this entire region.

It is not for the international community to seek to rule and govern Bosnia, but none of us can be indifferent to the prospects for stability and peace in this important part of Europe.

Ethnic separation and strife here will impact directly on all European countries, and on the future of Europe's relationships with other important parts of the world. There can be o European"exit-strategy" from Bosnia or the Balkans. It has been, and always will be, and important part of Europe.

We are still in the middle of the process of learning all the lessons of Bosnia. And no discussion of the future of our efforts to build a common foreign and security policy can be meaningful without taking all these lessons fully into account. Europeans must be able to act far more forcefully and coherently than in the past – and must be prepared to face the institutional implications of this across the entire range of instruments available for the conduct of diplomatic, economic and military relationships between nations.

One of the lessons of my year dealing with Bosnia has been that no European nation acting alone can achieve what European countries might be able to do together. There is scarcely any such thing any more as a national foreign policy that is truly effective.

But the failure in Bosnia before the deal struck in autumn 1995 was as much the failure of the transatlantic relationship, as of Europe or the US individually. There cloud probably have been peace far earlier, on roughly the terms we see now, if there had been unity of policy and of coherence in action across the Atlantic.

Success and failure in Bosnia will have a big impact on how Europeans and Americans face all future challenges. The break-up of Yugoslavia was the first crucial test for the new world order that was supposed to be established. We must urgently learn the lessons from it if we are to be more successful in the future. And, in the process, the EU must understand that it will have to remain committed to the security and stability of this part of Europe for the foreseeable future.

The author is High Representative for the implementation of the Bosnian Peace Accords.