

Article by the High Representative, Carl Bildt: "Bosnia can't do it Alone"

Within 24 hours of the certification of the nation-wide election results, Bosnia's new three-person presidency met for the first time on Monday. Thus began the process of setting up common institutions for the country and fully implementing the constitution drawn up in the [Dayton peace agreement](#). When news of the meeting emerged, there was first shocked disbelief, then a feeling that the war might really have come to an end.

But achieving even that meeting required considerable effort. The three presidents failed to agree on the time and the venue of their first meetings. It was only when I used the authority given me by the international community – supported by the governments of the Contact Group – that it was possible to persuade them to attend.

But having overcome the political hurdles that kept them apart, the three presidents sat down for nearly four hours of businesslike talks on their common future.

The first meeting showed the efforts necessary to set up common institutions – but also that these efforts can pay off if properly co-ordinated. It also showed it is not going to be easy to create common institutions for Bosnia and make them work in the coming months. There is still uncertainty whether all those elected will turn up for the presidential and parliamentary inauguration ceremony on Saturday in the National Theatre in Sarajevo. And the process of setting up the Council of Ministers, which will be the executive arm of the government, has hardly begun.

Such institutions must be based on true power-sharing between the two entities and three communities in Bosnia. Secession by one community is as unacceptable as dominance by one. The power-sharing arrangements which broke down in 1991 and 1992 must now be made to work.

When the common institutions are set up, they need to prepare the policies to address the pressing economic and social tasks facing Bosnia. These were neglected by most politicians during the backward-looking nationalist election campaign. Unless these tasks receive urgent attention, the country will sink into economic chaos and social despair within the next few years.

The international community is ready to assist. My office has helped put together a package of urgent legislation to get the country going. We have also drawn up economic policy priorities necessary for economic revival. Their adoption will ensure that the flow of reconstruction aid under the direction of the World Bank, the European Commission and my office can continue.

When the peace programme was drawn up a year ago, it was focused only on 1996 – and then very much on the military aspects. The task now is to prepare a framework for the continued involvement of the international community during the coming years. Without a sustained international commitment, the peace agreement will not be fulfilled.

There will be a continuing need for a military force in Bosnia, primarily for deterrence. It is needed to cool down any hot-heads contemplating military options, and to allay the fears of others that such options could be exercised. During the period leading up to the new September 1998 general election, there must be greater emphasis on the political, civilian and economic issues. Better conditions must be created for free and fair elections in two years, with the aim that hopes for the future will displace the fears from the

past which dominated this year's polls. Much can be done to support independent mass media and foster a pluralistic political environment.

The opportunities for refugees to return to their homes must be improved. Although up to a quarter of a million have returned this year, few have dared cross the invisible ethnic barriers separating the three communities. Economic reconstruction must continue, and must reach more widely across the country. Of the reconstruction aid disbursed so far, only 1.5 per cent has reached Serb areas.

The country's authorities must also take steps to improve business incentives. The payroll tax on employers is around 95 per cent of wages and regulation is excessive – making honest business virtually impossible. It is increasingly unacceptable that key political and military leaders indicted by the international tribunal on war crimes in the former Yugoslavia are allowed to go free.

For Republika Srpska, this is of particular importance. It should simply not allow Radovan Karadjic, former president of the Bosnian Serb entity, to hide like a coward – he should be encouraged to go to The Hague and defend his record in a fair trial. And General Ratko Mladic should be sent packing from his command of the army at the earliest opportunity.

But the Federation is also at fault. If it is to be taken seriously, it should enforce compliance with the orders of the international tribunal on its territory. Otherwise, it risks being as much in violation of its obligations as Republika Srpska.

The foreign ministers of the main countries supporting the peace process will meet in Paris on November 14 to confirm the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and decide on the framework for consolidating the peace process in 1997 and 1998.

All the countries of the Peace Implementation Council will then meet in London in early December to agree the detailed programme of implementation during 1997.

Between these meetings, working-level preparations will continue in Germany. It is not a question of revising Dayton agreement. It is a question of reaffirming it and recommitting all the parties to its implementation. Without sustained international support and commitment, there is a serious risk that conflicts will break out again, taking the country and the region towards partition.

But with such support, the Dayton agreement might be made to work.