

High Representative urges BiH to catch winds of change five years after Dayton

On this day, five years ago, the General Framework Agreement for Peace was initialled after weeks of negotiations at the Wright-Patterson airbase in Dayton, Ohio. Whatever the compromises that the DPA brought – and continues to bring – the accord saved many lives and the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It remains the blueprint for lasting peace and a better future for BiH.

The peace has not been easy. The DPA was up for critical discussion at an anniversary meeting in Dayton, Ohio, last week – the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, attended alongside Croatian President Stipe Mesic, the US Ambassador to the U.N., Richard Holbrooke, the chief prosecutor at the U.N. war crimes tribunal in The Hague, Carla Del Ponte, and other senior international and BiH officials. During the discussions, there was widespread agreement that the DPA, and the Constitution it contains, remains a strong basis for the functioning of the BiH institutions and safeguards the rights of all national communities in the country. It is also a sound buttress against calls for the redrawing of borders in the region and will remain the anchor of international engagement in BiH.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is at an important crossroads five years after Dayton and after peaceful general elections held earlier this month. The High Representative calls on not just political leaders, but all BiH citizens to catch the winds of change and set the country on course for a prosperous future in Europe.

To continue looking inward, to ignore the changes in Croatia

and Yugoslavia who now compete for dwindling international aid, will only see this country impoverished and forgotten. The High Representative looks to Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders to make a dynamic start at the Zagreb Summit on Friday, November 24th.

The Dayton Accords will continue to guarantee the security and justice all BiH citizens crave. But it is up to the people of BiH – each and every one of them – to ensure:

- deep-rooted economic reform
- refugee returns and implementation of the property laws
- strong institutions, especially at State level, that deliver the needs of all BiH citizens

The war is over. Now let's work hard to win the peace.