

HR/EUSR Speech at the EUPM Inaugural Ceremony

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests.

In the course of my duties as both the High Representative and the Special Representative of the European Union, I attend a good number of official ceremonies and formal events.

But I can honestly say none of them has marked such an important event as the opening of the European Union's Police Mission – the first such mission ever to be launched under the European Security and Defence Policy.

The reason I say that is simple.

This mission marks a turning point both for Europe and for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For BiH, today marks a milestone along the journey towards Europe. It stands as evidence of the progress that is being made in transitioning from post-conflict to pre-accession status.

Why do I say that?

Because, unlike the United Nations Police Mission, which laid the foundations on which we are now building, this European Mission will quite deliberately be designed to take more of a back seat.

This is a sign of progress. It is a clear example of BiH increasingly taking over the business of “doing” things, rather than having things done for them; while the International Community moves increasingly from “doing” to “monitoring”.

That is the way it should be, and the way it increasingly will be as this country moves towards EU accession. Bosnia doing. Europe assisting.

And for Europe, today demonstrates a new determination within the EU to take responsibility for the problems of its own continent.

By taking on this mission, the EU is demonstrating the importance its Member States place on success in the Balkans – on stabilisation and on closer association

It is demonstrating that it does not have an exit strategy from the Balkans, but rather an entry strategy for the Balkans that ends with EU membership for BiH and her neighbours.

And it is demonstrating that establishing the Rule of Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina is an absolute requirement – a non-negotiable basic condition – upon which EU entry depends.

For without the rule of law, there can be no future – certainly no European future – for this country.

And without professional local police forces that protect citizens whatever their ethnic identity, there can be no lasting peace and no lasting reconciliation.

But again, it is important that people understand the nature of the Mission – the objectives of the Mission.

The EU cannot police Bosnia. But it can help the Bosnians to police themselves more effectively.

EUPM will be smaller and co-located with local police. It will focus particularly on helping Bosnia's police guarantee the safety of returnees, and, above all, to fight the most systematic criminal threat in the region: organized crime.

For this effort to succeed, the whole criminal justice system needs reforming – which is why we in OHR are working with the

Bosnian authorities to restructure the courts, reform the judiciary and establish the State Court with a special chamber to deal with complex, organised criminal cases.

That way, when the police arrest criminals, they will, in future, face real justice. We will have – from the investigation stage, right through to incarceration – a criminal justice system that works.

Today marks the official launch ceremony of the EUPM. But Commissioner Frederiksen and his team have, of course, been fully operational since they took over from the IPTF on 1st January. That handover has taken place very smoothly, and EUPM officers and their vehicles are already becoming a familiar part of the landscape. The fact that the transition has gone so well says a great deal about the professionalism of the Commissioner and his officers. Sven Frederiksen knows that he can count on my total support, both as part of the EUPM chain of command in my role as EU Special Representative, and as High Representative. Indeed I will not hesitate to take action, if the Commissioner requests it of me, against any police officers who obstruct the work of the EUPM, although I hope and trust that that will not be necessary.

Professional police forces, operating within the law, and at the service of the citizen, are a hallmark of any decent, peaceful, civilised community. That is what the people of this country deserve, and what they demand: the best police forces, operating to the best European standards.

We have already come a long way in that direction in recent years. Now we must complete that work, together. That is what this Mission is all about. We must see it through to success: and we shall.