

PDHR's remarks on the 18th Anniversary of the Helicopter Crash at Prokosko Lake



Honouring a Commitment to Peace

We gather today to honor and to remember twelve colleagues who lost their lives here as they carried out vital work to ensure lasting peace in this country.

That a fatal crash occurred in a place as beautiful as this surely reflects the nature of things in our world – the coexistence of ugliness and beauty, of hatred and love, of failure and success.

The brutality of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place against the backdrop of one of the world's most idyllic countries. And the cruelty and banality of chauvinism that fueled that conflict and that has burdened the country ever since, emerged from a culture that is sophisticated and compassionate.

The fact that we are standing here 18 years after the deaths of our colleagues reflects another fundamental aspect of our world, and this is that – although it sometimes takes time – the things that are built on positive, constructive, generous principles eventually prevail.

Former Polish President Lech Walesa wisely pointed out that it's almost impossible to build anything when there is

frustration, bitterness and a mood of helplessness. The opposite also applies: all things are possible when there is confidence, generosity and a determination to succeed.

These positive attributes – confidence, generosity and determination – can be rewoven into the fabric of BiH society. That is why it is not unreasonable to believe that the positive will prevail here, no matter what the difficulties may be in the short and medium term.

Our colleagues died on this mountainside, but we are here today – in this place and in this country – to continue their work. That work did not end with them and it will not end with us. It will go on, because it is rooted in powerful and positive principles.

Principles of inclusion, of justice, of reconciliation, of peace.

These will outlast contrary calls for hatred and spite, for suspicion and silence and division.

Truth gets the better of falsehood in the long run, love gets the better of hate. The positive prevails.

We stand here in sadness but not in despair – because the work that was being carried forward by our colleagues in 1997 is being carried forward today by a broad community of women and men inside and outside Bosnia and Herzegovina who believe this can and will be a country in which every citizen has the ability to live and work in dignity and peace.

We honour the memory of Peter Backes, Livio Beccaccio, Andrzej Buler, David Kriskovich, Leah Melnick, Charles Morpeth, William Nesbitt, Marvin Padgett, Thomas Reinhardt, Jurgen Schauf, Georg Stiebler and Gerd Wagner.

We honour their memory by continuing their work – and we go from this place with a renewed commitment to do that.