Remarks by Principal Deputy High Representative Larry Butler at the Peace Support Operations Training Centre

When I spoke to this group a year ago I drew attention to "a transformation that will affect this country well beyond the immediate confines of its military establishment" and I said that the officers participating in the Peace Support Operations Training Centre were at the "cutting edge" of this transformation.

Well, a year on, the transformation has moved forward decisively – and you remain at its cutting edge.

- A year ago we were looking forward to a situation where unified BiH Armed Forces operated under the direction of a single Ministry of Defence. Today we are *in* that situation.
- A year ago we were looking forward to the possibilities and challenges that would arise if and when BiH began negotiating a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union. Today we are *facing* those challenges and we are just beginning to make the most of the possibilities.

And these two seismic changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina 's postwar recovery and transition to a prosperous market democracy – the unification and modernization of the Armed Forces and the launch of SAA negotiations – are not coincidental: they are interlinked.

Fully professional armed forces under the democratic direction of the state are the European norm. And in due course we hope

that BiH's successful creation and maintenance of a modern defence establishment will be reflected in participation in Partnership for Peace. In other words the progress that has been made in the course of the last few months has been consistent with *and an integral part of* BiH's broad forward movement towards greater and greater integration in Euro-Atlantic structures

Yet modernizing the armed forces isn't simply another box to be "ticked off" in the succession of reforms that are taking BiH back into the European mainstream.

The Armed Forces have a particular and profound importance for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina , beyond perhaps the importance they customarily attach to other institutions. (I am addressing my remarks principally to those of you who are in the BiH Armed Forces, but this particular point, of course, applies equally to those of you who are coming from the armed forces of other countries in the region).

In a very tangible way the armed forces represent the country.

If the Armed Forces are efficient and effective, not only can they play their allotted role of ensuring BiH's security, they can also, in many different ways, reflect and support the progress that the country has made in its postwar recovery and transition.

You truly represent Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Your success will be viewed as the success of the country. It is therefore crucially important that you succeed.

This goes well beyond symbolism.

It affects the operational and administrative circumstances under which you serve.

Last year, conscription was finally phased out completely. Today, for the first time ever, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a

fully professional army.

This requires a basic mind-shift, inside the Armed Forces and in society at large.

During the period of universal conscription, membership of the Armed Forces was widely viewed as a cumbersome obligation, to be *endured* – the *least* productive phase in a young man's education and one that often got in the way of more focused and useful training and learning opportunities.

It's not surprising therefore that the uniform was not always seen as a symbol of integrity and success but – often – as a symbol of generally pointless and unproductive effort (or indeed lack of effort!)

As the role and nature of the Armed Forces changes in the post-conscription era the level of popular esteem for the Armed Forces will also change. The army can come to be seen as a respected, confident, and positive part of national life.

What does this mean for those of you who have chosen to serve?

It means that you have taken on a formidable responsibility – your career is not a mandatory obligation but an individual life choice. You are *responsible* for the uniform you wear.

And it means that society in general – and the army in particular – has very clear obligations towards you.

You are at the beginning of your military careers – you will be the backbone of the new professional army. So the Armed Forces must offer you the kind of career development opportunities that exist in comparable organisations – major corporations for example.

The army must offer you academic and vocational opportunities which mean that, after ten or fifteen years service, should you decide to return to civilian life you will take with you skills that will allow you to contribute in a positive and

particular way to the further development of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This is entirely consistent with the fundamentally different military doctrine under which the BiH Armed Forces now operate.

The Armed Forces' responsibility is no longer limited to territorial defence.

- As BiH aims for participation in PfP and eventual membership of NATO the emphasis will be, quite naturally, on participating effectively in NATO-led structures that provide for *collective* defence – and this effective participation will require a high degree of technical and operational sophistication.
- At the same time, as BiH begins to participate more actively in international diplomacy the country's capacity to deploy military units in humanitarian and peace support operations will increasingly have to be augmented – and here too a range of specialized and highly developed skills will have to be available in the Armed Forces.

So there is a natural synergy.

The country needs the advanced skills that military officers can bring when they return to the civilian work force. The army needs these very same skills in order to carry out the increasingly sophisticated and complex tasks that are assigned to it.

You need to acquire these skills, as officers and as citizens.

I would like to express my appreciation to Brigadier General Henning Larsen, Colonel Paul Kellett and the staff of the Peace Support Operations Training Centre for the work they are doing here. This work is at the heart of the effort to modernise and professionalise the Armed Forces so that they

have the necessary skills to take part in key operations overseas.

The Armed Forces are now fully into the mainstream of professional life in BiH. You are engaged in managerial, technical and operational activities that are comparable to those carried out in other large organisations. In your case these operations are central to the *security* as well as the wellbeing of the country

Your uniform commands respect by virtue of what it stands for – a professional, democratic, modern and effective army. I salute all of you who have chosen to wear it.