

Remarks by Senior Deputy HR Martin Ney at a Peace Support Operations Seminar: “Armed Forces of BiH Leading the Way”

– Peace Support Operations Training Centre –

Allow me first of all to commend Brigadier General Henning Larsen, Colonel Philip Lilleyman and the staff of the Peace Support Operations Centre for the work that is being done here.

This is a gathering that in itself represents many of the positive aspects of Bosnia and Herzegovina 's recent development. We have with us this morning officers from the Armed Forces of BiH who are at the forefront of this country's integration in Euro-Atlantic structures.

I need hardly remind you that we have just experienced a significant setback in terms of launching Stabilisation and Association talks with the European Union – but in other areas, BiH is moving forward at a pace that would have been considered unrealizable even two or three years ago. Defence Reform is proceeding on schedule – and that means the benefits can start to be delivered without unnecessary delay. This has direct implications for every AFBiH officer in this room. Professionally, you are part of a broader military system that is now guaranteeing peace in post-Cold War Europe and beyond.

The issue now is how to optimize Bosnia and Herzegovina 's contribution to this system.

We are all well aware of the key roles which relatively small countries have been able to play in international peacekeeping operations. Indeed, many of these countries actually operate from a position of advantage, as they do not have to contend with the geopolitical and historical baggage that attaches, for example, to members of the UN Security Council.

The scope for the BiH Armed Forces to establish a distinctive niche in international peacekeeping – consistent with this country's particular logistical and personnel resources – is very large indeed.

It might be asked whether this has much impact beyond the armed forces and indeed beyond the relatively small number of officers being deployed on peacekeeping operations.

The answer is yes – it does have an impact, a huge impact.

Because the rehabilitation of the BiH Armed Forces under the Defence Reform process offers pointers to the broader postwar rehabilitation of BiH itself.

The Armed Forces have been reconstituted so that

- the organization of the military now reflects what BiH needs
- the organization of the military now reflects what BiH can afford
- the organization of the military is now clearly predicated on ensuring the security of the citizens of this country – which is, after all, the core duty of armed forces in any democracy.
- the traditions of the formerly separate military organizations representing BiH's constituent peoples have been maintained – in such a way as to *enrich* the military tradition rather than undermine it

As we all know, the previous system was ruinously expensive. Hard to justify in a wealthy country, positively scandalous in

Bosnia and Herzegovina , where scarce resources can barely cover basic social services.

The new integrated chain of command vastly reduces administrative costs, and at the same time rationalises the system of command and control. The last thing a soldier in the field needs is an unclear chain of command.

The decentralised defence institutions ensure that the AFBiH reflect the composition of BiH as a state of three Constituent Peoples and Others.

And in addition to Parliamentary assembly oversight, the BiH Presidency, as the supreme commander of the armed forces, ensures that vital national interests are protected.

All of these provisions simply establish a framework. It is within that framework that the serving officers and other ranks of the AFBiH can start to do their job. The issues of inclusiveness, mutual security and mutual respect have been codified and institutionalised – now we can get on with the job in hand.

This applies to peacekeeping operations as it applies to all other forms of military activity. The AFBiH is now engaged in establishing forms of peacekeeping activity that are consistent with its logistical capacity; the road is now open for this process to deliver substantial positive results in terms of BiH's contribution to the military system of the continent. The road is open because the arguments over institutional arrangements have been resolved.

We must strive to do the same in other areas – economy, politics, social rehabilitation. It should be a source of particular pride to all of you that the armed forces are leading the way.