

Remarks by the High Representative and EU's Special Representative in BiH, Paddy Ashdown at the EUPM Medal Parade

It is an honour to address you today.

We are here to mark another milestone in Europe's mission here in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to pay tribute to you, the men and women that embody the European Union's commitment to this country.

BiH's rightful place is in the European Union. To get there, BiH will have to undertake the reforms and reach the standards necessary for membership. There can be no compromise on that. But we can help them with advice and support. That is why your mission is so critical. Not only are you improving policing, improving security, improving the protection of human rights, through your work in BiH. You are also helping this country down the road to Europe, and the stability and prosperity BiH has been so long denied.

This is not lost on the citizens of this country, who draw reassurance and confidence from your presence and commitment.

Nor is it lost on your colleagues in BiH's police forces who, I know, appreciate and value your support and professional guidance.

And it is certainly not lost on me and my international colleagues, who admire and support your desire to make a positive change here and your willingness to support our wider

efforts.

Our joint mission is to help this country develop independent and professional police forces in line with the highest standards in Europe. Police forces capable of inspiring trust instead of fear; capable of protecting all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina equally and in accordance with the law.

And nowhere will this be more apparent than in the new State Investigation and Protection Agency that we are currently helping the BiH authorities to build. This agency will be BiH's key weapon in the fight against the organized criminal networks that held this country hostage since the war ended almost a decade ago.

Together with the police forces of this country, we are breaking the legacy of BiH's past and ensuring that the police serve the citizens rather than the politicians.

Together, we are restoring the confidence in the police – a confidence that was shattered by the role they played in the war.

Together, we are at last beginning – too slowly perhaps – but beginning to push back against the mafia and war criminals that have for too long treated this country as a lawless space.

There are still many challenges ahead, as the operation in Visegrad last weekend has tragically shown.

As EUPM Officers, your very presence here helps to develop a trust between BiH's citizens and their police forces, helps ensure that the police are held accountable for their actions within a democratic framework.

Your role – as monitors and mentors, and as professional colleagues of your Bosnian counterparts is to support and

encourage, and also to warn and advise, when progress stalls.

I know you will continue to do just that. Pushing your mission and your selves just as hard as you push your BiH colleagues.

BiH has serious European ambitions. So BiH's authorities know they must co-operate with you fully in your work. This country cannot become part of modern Europe without the rule of law; and it cannot have the rule of law without professional police forces.

BiH's challenge, and our joint mission, is clear.

Thank you for making such an outstanding contribution to that mission; that future; this country's hope.