

Remarks by the High Representative/EU Special Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling at the EU Family Conference



Thank you Ambassador Schmunk for that introduction; for setting the scene for this weekend's events; and for organising this gathering of the EU family in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the eve of what is a historic anniversary.

In the coming years, the European Union is going to play an ever more important role in Bosnia and Herzegovina as this country transitions from peace implementation to European integration. The road that this country is travelling – from Dayton to Brussels – is likely to be complex, long and difficult.

Hence the importance of appropriate EU support to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Hence also the importance of events like today where all of us – the European Commission, EUFOR, the EU Monitoring Mission, the EU Police Mission and EUSR – are represented.

I've just arrived from Berlin where preparations are under way for a summit of the European Union's Heads of State and Government to mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. Whole sections of the city are cordoned off in

anticipation.

Half a century on, I suspect the signatories of the Treaty of Rome would be amazed both by this commotion and also the success of their initiative.

The Treaty of Rome is significant for many reasons, not least because it heralded a break with the past. Twelve years after the greatest conflict in the history of humankind, former belligerents chose to put aside their differences for the future of the next generation.

This message should be clear to everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Twelve years after the end of the conflict here, the citizens and leaders of this country face many of the challenges and choices faced by the citizens of Europe in 1957.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is also on the threshold of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

Some people seem to believe that the project cannot succeed because of continuing disagreements, distrust and recrimination that are a by-product of war.

These people may be too young to remember the distrust and recrimination in the rest of Europe after the war of 1939 to 1945. I'm not. In 1957, Europe was still bedevilled by the bitterness and dislocation spawned by the war.

The statesmen who launched the EEC half a century ago were able to see beyond their immediate difficulties to the prospect of a prosperous and secure future. That's what the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina have to do today.

In a historic week for the European Union, they have the opportunity to reach a historic agreement for the future of the next generation. They must seize it.

Thank you.