Speech by HR At a Ceremony to Mark the Handover of Camp McGovern by SFOR to the Brcko Civil Authorities

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we mark a further small milestone in BiH's progress towards becoming a normal state.

The fact we are able to do so owes everything to the work of the hundreds, indeed the thousands of soldiers who have served here atCampMcGovern.

It's almost a decade since your predecessors pitched this Camp.

The Brcko you leave now is very different from the Brcko your predecessors found then.

Then, Brcko was a by-word for tension, for violence, for division.

Today, it has become a symbol of progress, of stability, of growing prosperity.

For some time now, Brcko has been a model for the rest of the country in implementing pragmatic economic and social policies that have brought real rewards to citizens.

The security situation in the District has been consolidated in tandem with the stability that these policies have delivered.

The message of this is clear: economic progress and political

stability are the building blocks in creating a normal BiH.

And a normal BiH is what all of this country's citizens fervently desire.

The positive political climate in Brcko – which faces the same problems experienced by communities throughout BiH but which has been more successful than many in producing sensible solutions – bodes well for the 2 October elections, when the citizens of the District will for the first time be able to vote directly for their local representatives.

In a normal country, local elections focus heavily on bread-and-butter politics – they are about extending roads, improving rubbish collection, putting new roofs on school buildings and so on.

In Brcko, practical politics have delivered practical benefits and one crucial consequence of this is a security situation that makes today's handover possible.

Political leaders are ultimately judged on their capacity to get things done – to get the building blocks in place and actually *build* things. This applies at the municipal level all the way up to the Council of Ministers.

At the BiH level we are now completing the institutional infrastructure that can guarantee democratic freedoms and prosperity for this country no matter which political party is in the ascendant. We are, as it were, putting the roof on the BiH institutional house, completing the building process.

Over the next six months the International Community and our BiH partners will focus on consolidating the institutional structures and operating capacities of SIPA, the War Crimes Chamber in the State Court, the Indirect Taxation Authority, the Intelligence-Security Service, and the Defence and Security Ministries. In each case, the object of the exercise is practical. Consolidating these institutions is a

prerequisite for closer ties with NATO and the EU – but even if that were not the case, their capacity to operate efficiently would be crucial to BiH, crucial to its ability to function as a normal country. Because these institutions are geared, in the judicial, economic, political and military spheres, to the protection of citizens in a free and economically viable society.

Today, though, we celebrate success here in Brcko – success that bodes well and has lessons for the people of the rest of this country.

But above all, we pay tribute to the many men and women of IFOR, and now SFOR, who have served here at CampMcGovern.

Over all those years, day in day out, you have kept the peace in this community.

This Camp, and your comrades, have seen some tough and testing times – especially in those early days in Brcko.

But when you strike the flag that has flown proudly over this base for so many years now, and which has stood in all that time for protection, for stability, and for a brighter future, you will do so knowing this: that when you return home, you will to be able to declare with pride and justification: 'Mission Accomplished'.

And you will take away with you one more thing: the knowledge that the people of this corner of Bosnia and Herzegovina will always remember what you did for them, and they will always be grateful.