

The Dayton Peace Accords Anniversary

Four years ago in Dayton, Ohio, a terrible war was finally brought to an end. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina paid an incalculable price in lives and displacement of individuals as well as entire families. Physical damage was severe; moral damage was even worse, as hatred and distrust destroyed harmony and tolerance.

On this fourth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, we welcome again the absence of war and the deepening of peace. As we take stock of where we are, we see what we lack for a truly durable peace: a functioning sovereign state that unites all peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina; an economy free from political influence and corruption that can provide jobs and stability; and the ability for all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes.

The momentous events at Dayton four years ago created a new state structure for Bosnia and Herzegovina. If that state is to survive and prosper, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina must demand of their leaders to treat this one sovereign state as legitimate and worthy of the loyalty of all of its citizens. We view the New York Declaration as an encouraging step on the part of the political leadership of BiH to assert greater ownership over the peace implementation process.

The International Community and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are working hand-in-hand to repair the physical and moral damages of war. However, there are still forces of separation and ethnic hatred who want the commitments and solemn promises of Dayton to crumble.

It is our firmest belief that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina want peace, tolerance and prosperity. These goals

are within their grasp, but they must be seized by the leaders of this country and not only by the International Community. Our position and powers here are unique; but our time here is temporary. As we commemorate the fourth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accord, we reiterate our commitment to work with the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to help forge a modern democratic state out of the ravages of war and to make those historic agreements work.

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