

Tribute to Commissioner Sven Frederiksen by Paddy Ashdown, High Representative for BiH

We are gathered here in the cold of a Bosnian winter to bid farewell to our friend and colleague, Sven Frederiksen.

Sven's warmth as a human being was one of his foremost qualities.

We could have done with that warmth today.

Sarajevo has seen more than its fair share of sadness as a city.

Sven devoted so much of his professional life to relieving that sadness, and to help bring peace and normality back to the people not just of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but to the whole of this region.

It is particularly cruel that just as we are within sight of that normality, Sven should be taken from us, and from the job he was doing with such service and commitment at the helm of the European Union's Police Mission.

This is the saddest of times. We are consumed with our sorrow at the suddenness of Sven's passing. But if Sven were here, I feel sure he would not want us to be downcast: with that wry smile of his, he'd say something to lighten our hearts.

I cannot offer to do that.

But I can offer a few reflections on Sven as we knew and loved him.

Sven was a big man, with a big personality. He was the archetypal gentle giant, whose very presence was a source of

comfort and reassurance.

I have seen that for myself in countless meetings, including this Monday morning, in the last hours of his life. When Sven spoke, he did so with an authority that was immediately reassuring, and a quiet confidence that was contagious. He mixed in high circles, but he remained resolutely modest and unstuffy. He hated pomposity. No wonder people listened to him – from senior politicians to members of the public.

Sven was a professional – a professional policeman and a dedicated public servant. He devoted his life to serving others, and to making their lives safer and more secure. He did that in his own country, where he served his community with such distinction, and rose inexorably up the ranks of the police force. And he did so much further afield, above all in the war torn Balkans – a world away from the conditions with which he was familiar at home.

Above all, Sven was a leader, who commanded respect and affection in equal measure. He possessed leadership qualities in abundance, and his passing leaves a huge gap at the European Union Police Mission which he created and led so ably.

What can I say that will offer some condolence – to his colleagues, to his country, above all, to his dear wife, Annie, to whom he was so utterly devoted?

Sven, you touched our lives.

We will miss you terribly.

But we will promise you this.

The work you began with the European Union Police Mission will go on, with new vigour, and new determination, as you would have wanted it to, to bring a better future for the people of this country for whom you gave so much.

That is the best tribute we can give to this brave Danish policeman, to this dedicated European public servant, and to this devoted husband and father – – and my dear friend, Sven.