

TV Address by the European Union Special Representative and High Representative in BiH, Paddy Ashdown to the people of BiH

Good evening.

BiH is now at a crucial point on its road to peace and I have four things to say to you tonight.

First, when I became high representative over two years ago, the European union also appointed me as the first European Union special representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina . This was because BiH is on the way to Europe .

We are moving from the era of Dayton and onto the road to Brussels , so, in the future, I will increasingly be acting in my role as the European union's special representative. I will still, of course, be carrying out my duties as your high representative, and I'll be doing it as before and our international partners, such as the United States , Canada , Turkey , Russia , and others, will continue to play a major role in Bosnia and Herzegovina . But, increasingly, it will be Europe that will drive what we do and the direction we must go.

Second, the European Union is therefore, more and more, going to take the lead here. You saw that yesterday when Javier Solana and Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the NATO secretary general, came here to explain how SFOR will hand over to the new European Union force EUFOR, at the end of this year. Now, what this means is this, that we are moving from NATO, which has

brought us from war to peace since Dayton , to an EU-led force that will protect us on the next stage of our journey.

Third, what does all this mean to you, and why is it happening?

Well, the short answer is that as Bosnia and Herzegovina changes and moves forward, so will the international presence here. As BiH moves from stabilizing the peace, to joining Europe , so the international presence and role must change, too.

NATO came here to bring peace. You just have to look around the country today to see how successful they have been. War is no longer the first threat, so we owe NATO a huge debt, but now a new phase has begun.

And here is my fourth point. Under the European Union, with the European Union force in BiH, this country will still be absolutely safe. The European Union troops that will replace NATO in December will still guarantee the peace and enforce Dayton . You can be sure of that. This will be a strong force, very much like SFOR today, and about the same size. Indeed, the vast majority of SFOR's soldiers today are already from European union countries. So I don't think you will see much difference on the ground.

The EU force will continue to work very closely with NATO, for instance to bring war criminals to justice. But the role of the European Union force will also go beyond just peace implementation. Let me give you an example. It will work with the European police mission to strengthen the rule of law in BiH, especially in fighting organised crime. And there is a good reason for that. Your criminals here in southeast Europe are our criminals in the European Union. Europe 's thieves know no borders. They use BiH and the Balkans to smuggle people, drugs and even arms into the European union. So it makes absolute sense for us to fight this common enemy

together.

The European Union force will also support Europe aid projects – over 200 million KM a year – so that this can make a real difference and bring this country steadily closer to Europe . Now the objective of all that international effort is clear. To put BiH irreversibly on the road to European Union membership. And with the arrival of EUFOR, I am now confident that the European Union has the resources and the will to help you on that path.

Now, we cannot travel that road for you. You have to do it. But in the months and years ahead, increasingly, we in Europe become both your destination, and your partner.