

Dayton – Peace and Prosperity

Op-ed by Ambassador Jonathan Moore, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

It is an honor to serve as OSCE Head of Mission as we prepare to mark the 20th anniversary of signing of the [Dayton Peace Agreement](#). For 20 years, Dayton has been the framework which has brought and sustained peace for Bosnia and Herzegovina. While it is far from perfect, it has succeeded where all other attempts failed. Dayton, and the Dayton constitution, will continue to be the backbone of BiH, its entities, and its citizens.

Dayton brought OSCE here, giving us a special role in conducting and observing the elections. Our role has of course evolved over time: the Central Election Commission took over election supervision in 2002, and OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights – the origins of which are linked to BiH's first after war elections held in 1996 – now handles election observation throughout OSCE's participating states. OSCE has adjusted its "footprint" across BiH, but still maintains an extensive network of field offices and very close ties with local institutions across the country. In addition to human rights, education and the fight against violent extremism are currently one of the priorities of our Mission. As BiH's partner on its path to prosperity, we hope to foster reforms and development, ranging from election reform to increasing the accountability of public officials to the people as well as making the activities and decisions of public institutions more transparent. So many years after the end of the conflict, we also want to see war criminals brought to justice. In order to implement these reforms it is necessary to amend the Dayton constitution.

We have seen many positive developments thanks to Dayton. Defence reform was a huge step forward, as was the Brcko amendment: both of those issues had been set aside in 1995 as too difficult to solve, and were solved successfully at later stage. Dayton continues to protect the state and the entities.

There are obvious limitations to Dayton. The most obvious is shown in the Sejdic-Finci case. Dayton's provisions for constituent peoples effectively disenfranchised those BiH citizens who are not Bosniaks, Croats, or Serbs. Whether as part of its regional integration process or through other means, the constitution must be changed to reflect international human rights standards.

During my 25-year career in diplomacy, I have spent more than ten years working in the Balkans and on Balkan topics. That is a great privilege for me. In the early 1990s, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was one of the United States' highest priorities. I remember spending long hours with talented and dedicated colleagues working to find a solution. We were motivated by a desire to end the war; as frustrated as we got, we knew that our bureaucratic hardships could not be compared with the suffering of the victims.

In that spirit I would like to note that today we are marking the 20th anniversary of the deaths of American diplomats, Robert Frasure – for whom I worked directly – Joseph Kruzal, and Nelson Drew, on Mount Igman. Their sacrifice illustrated the depth of U.S. efforts to end the war; rather than lounging in armchairs far away from

BiH, they were in BiH on treacherous mountain roads. That taught me a lesson: to seek solutions in the Balkans, you have to engage directly, or at least make the effort to do so. In all of my work on BiH, whether based here in BiH or in Washington, I have tried to follow that lesson.

I'm proud to have been one of many people who worked on bringing peace to BiH, and to be one of the people still working to respect Dayton and keep the peace. At the same time though I have to say that I wish we had succeeded in finding a solution much earlier. It's impossible to be satisfied with a diplomatic success that came about after more than three years of a horrible war, and so many thousands of victims. Nevertheless, I remain an optimist: traveling through the country, I have seen the real people of Bosnia and Herzegovina prove their commitment to a peaceful future.

Dayton, with all of its flaws, still makes that peaceful future possible.

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