

18. Statement on Bosnia and Herzegovina
North Atlantic Council
28 MAY 1998

1. The Alliance has made a decisive contribution to stability and peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Encouraging progress has been made recently in the implementation of many aspects of the Peace Agreement of 1995. But much remains to be done. Today, we endorsed the operational planning for the continuation of SFOR beyond June 1998, following consultations with the non-NATO contributing nations, to assist in the further implementation of the Peace Agreement. The creation within SFOR of a Multinational Specialized Unit, with the same mandate as other SFOR elements, will enhance SFOR's ability to support the local authorities in responding to civil disorder, without engaging in police functions, so as to assist the return of refugees and displaced persons and the installation of elected officials.

2. While the prime responsibility for implementing the Peace Agreement lies with the parties, SFOR will continue, within its means and capabilities, to provide broad support for civil implementation. This will include assisting and coordinating closely and efficiently with:

- the High Representative in the implementation of the civil aspects of the Peace Agreement;
- the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as a matter of high priority, with the phased and orderly return of refugees;
- the UN International Police Task Force in the reform and restructuring of the local police;
- the OSCE in the context of the September elections; and
- the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia by transferring persons indicted for war crimes to The Hague.

Detentions by SFOR over the past year of war crimes indictees have contributed to the peace process and underscored our commitment not to let this aspect of the Peace Agreement rest.

3. Progress in these areas will not only help to consolidate the peace within a single, democratic and multi-ethnic state, but will also help to create the conditions in which a NATO-led military presence is no longer needed. NATO has adopted a series of benchmarks to measure progress in the overall implementation of the Peace Agreement. This will allow progressive reductions in the size and profile of the force commensurate with its agreed tasks.

4. We strongly support the continuing implementation of confidence-building measures at the local and regional level. We look forward to the beginning of arms control negotiations, as provided for in the Peace Agreement, with the goal of establishing a regional balance in and around the former Yugoslavia, including appropriate verification arrangements. The Alliance has initiated a set of security cooperation activities with Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of promoting confidence and cooperation among the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and encouraging the development of democratic practices and central defence mechanisms, such as the Standing Committee on Military Matters established by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

5. We call on all parties to the Peace Agreement to redouble their efforts to implement the Agreement in full and thus to create the conditions for a peaceful, stable and prosperous future for Bosnia and Herzegovina.
