

Statement by Dr Nikola Spiric, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina At the Conference: «Sustainable economic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina through reforms and partnership»

Dear Prime Ministers,
Dear Mr. High Representative,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The process of economic policymaking is always challenging, particularly in a country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has such a complex governing structure.

This is precisely why I am pleased to participate in today's Conference and to be part of an endeavor that I hope will contribute to more effective policymaking.

The first reason I am pleased to take part in this event is that we have with us today representatives of government, employers and workers, as well as entrepreneurs and other key stakeholders in the economic life of the country.

One of the key objectives of today's meeting is to promote the institutionalization of dialogue among economic stakeholders of this country. As we have seen from the experience of other countries, this is a fundamental prerequisite for sound policymaking.

Let me stress this point: the BiH government understands that a top-down approach to economic management doesn't work.

It produces laws that cannot be implemented and regulations that cannot be applied, and it results in a business environment that deters investment and destroys jobs.

By contrast, a robust dialogue among policymakers and stakeholders – and we have already seen this in other transition countries – produces economic legislation that is responsive to the constantly changing demands of the free market; it produces regulations that protect consumers and stimulate business, and it facilitates a business environment that attracts investment and promotes job creation.

So, I call upon you to proceed with a real dialogue today – no platitudes and with lots of practical examples that foster dialog.

The second reason I am particularly pleased to take part in this conference is connected to the fact that public debate in Bosnia and Herzegovina is intensely political – this is not a bad thing; we are a new democracy and it is right that political opinion of every stripe should be vigorously advanced, in parliament, in the media, in the universities and so on.

But we are also a poor country and reducing poverty ought to be the single most important objective of our political establishment. Economic policies should not be Cinderella policies.

I am pleased that the media are here in strength. I hope that today's event will help place economic issues in center of public debate. If we succeed in doing that, we will have made a useful contribution to refocusing public and political attention on the task of reducing poverty in our country.

Thank you.