

Remarks by High Representative Valentin Inzko at the Forum for Prosperity and Jobs in BiH



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Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here with you today at the conclusion of what has been a fantastic launch event for this vitally important new initiative to get Bosnia and Herzegovina back to work.

At the outset, allow me to use this opportunity to commend the European Union both here in Sarajevo and in Brussels for the work they have done to get this initiative off the ground.

The initiative has my full support and it goes without saying that my Office stands ready to assist you in any way it can as we strive to get Bosnia and Herzegovina back to work.

Peter, this really has been a great launch. Well done!

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are dramatic and truly testing times for Bosnia and Herzegovina and like never before, the country needs catharsis

and a new start that puts the interests of the ordinary people of this country first.

We all know that even before the tragic floods that have so badly damaged huge areas of the country, there was a desperate need to try something new to arrest the downward slide the country has been on.

Because for far too long we have had an approach that has left huge numbers of people without work and even more people without the prospect of a better future and without the means to play a more active role in society.

I say this because we all know that work is about a lot more than putting a meal on the table and paying the bills. If we don't get people back to work then we not only prevent them from taking a full and active role in society but we also create the conditions for pessimism to take route.

The battle to create new jobs for the people of this country is alot more than a battle for living standards because we are aware that a life of dignity is simply not possible without work.

In this respect, the sheer scale of youth unemployment has been a particular worry, with the country's most talented and gifted young people invariably seeking to join their many talented compatriots abroad.

I am as pleased as the next person to see Bosnians and Herzegovinians succeeding abroad, but the time has come to give the country's young talent the opportunity to fulfill their potential at home and not abroad and in so doing to create opportunities and wealth for the entire country.

My message to the brightest and the best is simple – we need you to stay and we need you to get involved in this initiative! With your help we can create new opportunities and build a better future here in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, after these floods, I think that we can all agree that we need to see concrete progress and we need to see it quickly.

But where will this change come from? Perversely, change often emerges from the most trying and difficult of experiences and so it must be on this occasion.

Drawing from the bravery and tireless efforts we have seen in flood stricken areas, we now need to see this country to pull together and working as one in a way that we have not seen in previous years.

The spirit of solidarity and unity that we have seen rising from the flooded plains and valleys of this country should be an example to all of us.

The people of this country have shown that the arguments between politicians that have held the country back for so long do not interest them. They want to work together with their neighbors to solve problems and to get this country back on its feet.

While we cannot build Rome in a day, this can be the day we make a commitment to change. Today can be the start of a discussion that I for one very much hope takes centre stage in the forthcoming elections campaign.

I very much hope that this discussion will result in concrete measures to be taken by the incoming governments – in all the areas discussed by working groups, be it the labour market, the business environment, or social welfare.

Business as usual is not an option because if we go on doing what we are doing we will go on getting what we are getting. We all know that if we continue in this way then we will continue to travel a road that leads not only to ever deeper

poverty and decay, but also to ever deeper division.

And I speak not of ethnic division, I speak instead of the real division in the country – the division that exists between the privileged chosen few and the frustrated masses that are caught up in an endless struggle to make ends meet.

There is a more just, progressive and optimistic future on offer for this country, and we must take this opportunity to build it.

After all these years of bickering some of you will ask: Can it be done? My answer to you is yes it can!

Just look at how this country came together in the past to deliver huge and important reforms – just look at what was achieved with Defence Reform and the introduction of VAT.

We can do it again, but it will require is a fundamental change of approach that starts right now.

Concluding Remarks

Ladies and Gentlemen, it goes without saying that my Office stands ready to support this initiative in any way that it can as it moves forward.

However, more than ever we need to see change being articulated and driven forward by a domestic movement of the talented, hardworking and well intentioned people of this country.

Many of you who are here today will play an integral part in securing the changes that are required.

Sometimes it will not be easy, but you are not alone and you will succeed.

I want to use this opportunity to say to you directly that we will stand shoulder to shoulder with you as you move forward.

Together we will get Bosnia and Herzegovina back to work and we will complete the job we have started so many years ago.

Today was the day we renewed our commitment to take the steps that are necessary to create the jobs and prosperity this country so badly needs.

And I have no doubt in my mind that in the years to come we will look back at this gathering and remember it as the moment at which the country started putting the aspirations of its people for work, prosperity and a life of dignity first.

Thank you.