

Remarks by Brcko Supervisor Roderick Moore at the central ceremony marking 12th anniversary of Brcko District of BiH

Hello Brcko people and happy anniversary!

Let me at the very outset extend special good wishes to the women of Brcko District on this International Women's Day and I believe they are the happiest people in the world today, celebrating two occasions. I wish you a happy International Women's day!

It is a great honor for the District to have with us here today many presidents, ministers, ambassadors and other dignitaries. I am honored to be with you all again today.

I remember standing at this podium last year that I spoke of the bond and close relationship I feel with this community, with the people of Brcko. And I can tell you today that this bond, this close relationship has only grown stronger over the past year. It is a bond forged through so many encounters with decent, good-willed, and welcoming people from places such as Satorovici, Brezovo Polje, Gorice, Donji Zovik, Brka, Trnjaci, Bukvik, Markovic Polje, Boderiste, Plazulje, Vuksic, Boce, and so many other local communities.

I can share with you that my admiration for what you have accomplished as a community – and are continuing to accomplish – simply continues to grow.

You may have heard that the first Supervisor, Robert William Farrand, recently published a book about his time here as supervisor. I must say that the Brcko of 1997 that Farrand describes is miles away from the Brcko I know today. The destroyed buildings, the devastation and homelessness, vast numbers of the displaced, the checkpoints, the pervasive anger and despair – these things are mostly gone.

In spite of that and even though there are still deep scars from the conflict –social and political divisions are diminishing. Let me give you an example. The Brcko police chief recently told me that – in the whole of 2011 – there were no more than two or three interethnic incidents in the District, none of them violent. That is truly remarkable if you just think what happened here during the 90s – atrocities, mass graves, displaced persons, camps, etc. This is exactly the kind of progress that makes it possible to build a normal, decent, inclusive 21st-century society in my view.

Of course, we all know that the present situation isn't perfect. Brcko isn't – as one resident recently told me – the "El Dorado" that some outsiders think it is. I've seen with my own eyes too many families struggling to make ends meet, too many communities struggling with poverty, unemployment, and too many young people who see no future for themselves here.

There is an additional crucial challenge this community has to face – pervasive corruption. You have told me that you are sick of the bribes, the connections and favors to be paid for, which you see in public institutions.

However, it seems to me there are signs that the District's law enforcement agencies are starting to fight corruption seriously. They have had and they will continue to have active support of my Office and the support of the International Community. However, I am convinced they will win this battle only if citizens and local political parties actively, openly and without reserves reject corruption and demand that their institutions produce results.

These are tough challenges; I know that and I admit that. There are many others which I haven't mentioned, but I can tell you there is a clear and strong consensus in the International Community that Brcko is moving in the right direction, that it can overcome the difficulties it currently faces. This confidence underlies the serious discussion underway about the future of Supervision.

What is more important to me than that is that the citizens have shown time and again that they have the wisdom and resilience to solve problems through tolerance and enterprise – and in a way that will place the District on a sound footing for the years ahead.

Thank you for your attention!

