

Op-ed by HR Valentin Inzko: Judge candidates on how well they will serve citizens



By Valentin Inzko

On Sunday, citizens throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina will cast their vote in the municipal elections and declare who they want to lead their municipality for the next four years. This is a great responsibility, as it will affect their day-to-day lives.

These elections matter. They are an opportunity for citizens to reflect on their current municipal leadership and those competing against them for office. Voters should make their decision based on who can meet their needs on the issues that mean most to them, whether that is playgrounds, streetlights, rubbish collection or anything else. As a voter myself, my choice at municipal elections has always been for hard-working, down-to-earth politicians and political parties who understand that we should live in times of cooperation and integration, not isolation.

This is especially important in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and even more so in multi-ethnic, returnee communities. Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs and Others have a long history of mutual understanding, solidarity and cooperation. All groups did better when they worked together. Nationalism and division do not put food on the table.

Unfortunately, not all citizens have the right to vote in these elections. The citizens of Mostar have again been deprived of the right to choose who will run their city. This is shameful, and the citizens deserve better. As much as some politicians would like to blame the International Community, it is clear that the leading political parties in Mostar bear the responsibility for this situation. They must find a solution for Mostar without further delay, so that Mostarians may exercise their democratic rights.

This Sunday's elections are about practical politics. The results will make a difference – and that means that getting out and voting will also make a difference. If people select leaders at the municipal level who can identify broad areas of interest among their constituents and offer realistic solutions to common problems, it will show that change for the better is possible for this country, starting from the bottom up.

If you are genuinely happy with the way some candidates have been resolving concrete issues related to local infrastructure and the needs of the local community, if they have made your municipality a nicer, better and safer place for the children and the elderly, a municipality without corruption, then vote for them again. If this is not the case, review the alternatives thoroughly. That way you are making a concrete effort to think about your future. And the future is your top concern, your primary issue!

My appeal to the citizens of BiH is go out and vote on Sunday! Make a real, positive difference in your local community and in the country.

The Sunday elections will be also be monitored by 3000 citizens – nonpartisan observers. I would like to take this opportunity to call upon political subjects to actively cooperate with them.