



Speech by the PDHR and Brčko Supervisor Michael Scanlan on the occasion of the Brčko District Day

Brčko, 8 March 2020

Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen, let me congratulate you on this Brčko District Day.

In addition to the many local representatives and residents here today, let me acknowledge the BiH Presidency member Džaferović, RS President Cvijanović, and Federation Prime Minister Novalić and other dignitaries as well as representatives of our partners in the international community.

Just one year ago, I stood here and shared with you the vision of what Brčko could be. Since then, I have traveled to Brčko each month, ever more encouraged by the many developments that are poised to make that vision a reality.

I have found broad consensus that things must change, that Brčko's unique advantages need to be harnessed so as to restore in the young generation the faith that their future lies in the District.

This is understandable, as the District's abundant resources often have been expended poorly. Despite having the largest *per-capita* budget in the region, public buildings in Brčko have not been renovated to be energy efficient. To do so would have ensured that hospital rooms, school buildings and workplaces are always warm.

Renovation of the District's 187 public buildings would cost approximately 28 million KM. That would have been only 3.5 million KM per year over the last eight years, while at the same time creating financial savings for the budget.

But there is good news: In the last several months, the authorities have worked quickly to qualify for the UNDP-led energy efficiency initiative. How rapidly Brčko moves forward is strictly a question of how the authorities choose to use Brčko's enormous budget of 256 million KM. This is just one example of how public officials can and should use the resources provided by Brčko's unique co-efficient to invest in the future that the residents of the District deserve.

This is not just about reversing the negative trends of the past years, but about taking decisions that will make Brčko District one of the best environments to live and work in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On this Brčko District Day, I am pleased to say that the District leadership – Assembly Speaker Kadrić, Deputy Speaker Filipović, Mayor Milić, and Deputy Mayor Domić – have all stepped up to the challenge to take charge of the reform process. And that process – as they have recognized – requires not only political will, wisdom and courage, but also a wide buy-in. It is only by everyone working together that progress can be made to revive this once vibrant community.

This year it will be possible to see visible progress in Brčko if the authorities continue to adopt the necessary legislation.

A good starting point is the new Law on Budget adopted last December as it provides for responsible, transparent and targeted use of public funds. The District political establishment has an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to these values by using it to guide them in the adoption this month of the 2020 budget. The new law on associations and foundations to be adopted this spring will also further contribute to these objectives, while the summer should bring progress on a range of issues to stimulate economic activity in the District.

At the very least, this summer should see the commencement of construction works to modernize the Port, the completion of key studies as the basis for the reconstruction of the Brčko-Gunja Bridge, and the adoption of a range of business-friendly measures aimed at attracting investments, expanding businesses and generating jobs as well as public revenue.

The ongoing reform efforts I am talking about provide an opportunity for political parties and their representatives to run their election campaigns this fall on a platform of tangible results, but that means the Government and Assembly must work up to the elections.

At the same time, the citizens of the District must hold their elected officials accountable on delivering good governance, which should be the sole criteria on which they cast their vote. Citizens should also call out and demand accountability for corruption wherever they see it, and law enforcement and the judiciary must follow through in such cases. In this regard, Brčko District should serve as a model for the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Most importantly, this long-awaited and crucial progress will restore a sense of hope and provide an incentive for Brčko's youth to stay, to open businesses and to raise their families here. Who would not want to live in a vibrant economic community with good jobs, excellent infrastructure, and an array of cultural, sports, and entertainment facilities?

So, let me once more congratulate the residents on this Brčko District Day, but let me also issue a challenge to the District leadership to keep things moving in the right direction, in an atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation.

I believe all of you are up to the challenge, for the sake of this unique community.

Lastly, since today is also International Women's Day, allow me to extend my congratulations to all the women of Brčko, who are indispensable partners in building the District's future.

Thank you.