

Speech by Brcko Supervisor and PDHR Dennis W. Hearne at the Second Brcko District Business Forum

Dame i gospodo, dobar dan.

Radujem se što sam danas ovdje sa vama. Već drugi put dolazim na Business Forum i drago mi je vidjeti da se ovaj forum bavi važnim i aktualnim temama.

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One aspect of the Business Forum that I would particularly like to highlight is its contribution to the community.

By gathering all relevant stakeholders, the Forum offers a true platform not only for new business opportunities but also for a closer partnership between policy makers and business community. Both are an integral part of the efforts to make Brcko an attractive business destination and essential in building an even more stable and developed community.

At the same time, by carefully selecting discussion topics, the Forum demonstrates its awareness of the most pressing issues of relevance for doing business as well as its decisiveness to seek effective solutions and to solicit joint action towards their realization.

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This year's focus on the population is evidence in that regard.

The topic is *relevant*. Demographics not only provide a profile of the society but it is also an indicator of the size and composition of the labor force as one of the key factors of economic development.

The topic is also *pressing*. The recent demographic trends show that a pool of young, skilled individuals – which has always been a major resource of Bosnia and Herzegovina – is rapidly shrinking. According to the Union for Sustainable Return and Integration in BiH, more than 169,000 people left BiH in the last five years, with 18,000 leaving in the first half of 2018. No doubt, a significant number of those are from Brcko. These figures speak volumes not only of the prospects for BiH society but also of the prospects for the country's economic development.

These are the realities we need to face and we need to address.

The best way to do this is by creating conditions favorable to business development. Political stability, institutional stability and efficiency and continued commitment to reforms create a framework conducive to a healthy economy and a prosperous community. Strengthening – and not weakening – the Rule of Law and countering – and not stimulating – corruption are inseparable from this goal. Creating an environment for business development has to be the goal for the District authorities.

This is why the discussion on the topic of population is also an *opportunity*: an opportunity for all of us here to rightfully voice our expectations and to call for action at the time when prevailing trends raise concerns.

With the leadership, vision and sincere commitment to progress, which I have witnessed in Brcko District and with the support of all of us from the International Community, this goal is achievable.

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Na kraju, želim vam svako dobro u narednom periodu. Ja ostajem prijatelj Distrikta i Biznis foruma, i hvala lijepo