



Otisak.ba: Interview with PDHR and Brčko Supervisor Michael Scanlan

By: Adis Mujdanović

Supervisor for Brčko District of BiH Michael Scanlan stressed in his interview for Otisak.ba that it was essential to expedite the processes in this city.

Yesterday he visited the offices of Otisak.ba, after two days of meetings with the representatives of authorities and political parties represented in the District Assembly.

For Otisak he spoke about the reason for his coming to Brčko, the topics of his talks with the local officials, situation in this local community, problems, priorities that the representatives of the authorities should set themselves, how much and in which way he can exercise his influence on them to fix the situation in Brčko District of BiH, whether his experience can help in that, and what is his final goal when it comes to the office of the Supervisor.

Otisak.ba: What is the reason for your visit and what did you speak about with the representatives of the authorities and political parties of this local community?

Michael Scanlan: As the Supervisor I have the responsibility to follow up on all that goes on here and also to report to the PIC (Peace Implementation Council). I arrived to BiH in January and this is my third visit so far. My intention is to come once a month. In fact the goal is to see whether the authorities of Brčko District really make those decisions that are necessary to use the advantages of Brčko, having in mind its location and a very robust budget, in order to really ensure good services for the citizens. Partly that budget is also a result of the coefficient decision. As I said in my public address on the 8th of March, if the District authorities are truly ready to make the decisions necessary for ensuring prosperity, then the international community will help, but it really all starts from the authorities. It requires difficult compromises, but that is something that goes with the office they hold. And that

is the message I shared with the representatives, both of the opposition and of the position.

Otisak.ba: You were appointed the Supervisor of Brčko District of BiH in February of this year. How was the situation you found in this community upon your arrival and how do you comment on the developments in these few months since you've been in that office? By that I primarily mean once again the late adoption of the budget, beginning of the fiscalisation process, completion of the bypass road, adoption of the set of laws on salaries.

Michael Scanlan: What I saw when I came here first of all was the fact that many decisions that one would expect to be adopted fast are still on hold. Even when you speak about one potential donor, and that is the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, even the loans that would enable good infrastructure and thus a good quality of life, and also arrival of new businesses which means new taxes – even those are decisions that have been on hold for two or three years. For example, the Port modernization loan, if we are honest, that is something that should have been done by now. Now that the technical preconditions have been met, there is no reason not to complete everything by the end of the next year, if the right political decisions are made. In other words, had they done what was necessary, it would have been completed by now, as it was initiated two or three years ago. Then the steps towards a loan on waste management would have followed, which would open the possibility for a new loan for waste waters, and so on. One success brings another success. Because, if you want the help of both donors and private investors, you have to have fiscalisation. You have to be clear about your tax basis. Budget procedures have to be more transparent, and we have a new proposal on that, and so on. I have to say that in the last two or three months that process has been expedited. Fiscalisation has started, we have a new proposed budget law which has now been distributed to the institutions. Then, the Port loan has been signed. However, it all has to continue and it must be completed. The key in all that is to do it fast. I am very glad that the bypass road has been finished, but it should not have taken five years.

Otisak.ba: What are the biggest problems that the District is facing and what are the priorities that the representatives of the authorities should set themselves?

Michael Scanlan: The problems are mostly in the lack of speed in achieving good governance, good services for the businessmen, easing the registration process, infrastructure. That is the biggest obstacle. That is the challenge all over BiH, but Brčko has so many advantages. It is a small place, small area, it is situated on the river, it has good communications, due to its coefficient it has a healthy budget and there is no reason for everything not to go faster. That is something that the electorate has the right to expect from its elected officials and to hold them accountable for it. Also, when they do deliver, they should give them their support. Another very important thing is transparency. That refers to the taxpayers, regardless of whether they are individuals or companies. You have the right to know how your money is spent, because if you have that knowledge, if you have that transparency, then you have confidence in the authorities, you have confidence in how the money is spent, and it is important that you know it is not spent for someone's personal interests but really for collective interests. Today in meetings, when I spoke about those topics, everybody said "yes, yes, of course", but we will see whether that will really be the case. Will the fiscalisation proceed, will the new law on budget be adopted, will everything be finished when it comes to the Port, which will then lead to quality projects for waste management and then also for waste water management. All those results will speak for themselves, and all that should be seen in the next three months.

Otisak.ba: How much and in which way can you influence the authorities to fix the situation in this local community? Can your experience help in that?

Michael Scanlan: The decisions that must be made in Brčko must be made by the leaders of Brčkog. They are the ones who have decided to run for office, they are the ones who have decided to be politicians. And they have the privileged position to do good things for their community. And the community has the responsibility to support them when they do good things, and also to hold them accountable when they don't. What we can do, after they make the decisions demanded by the community, is to pool the international community to provide help and make sure that it is fast and efficient. The key thing is that they do it. Everything in life must be earned, through hard work. And of course, once again, citizens should hold them accountable at any time because that is how it is everywhere in the world, and they must be aware of it.

Otisak.ba: What is your final goal in your current office?

Michael Scanlan: My final goal would be, once I have to leave this position, in three or four years, for Brčko to truly be the beautiful place that it could and should be. I am now coming to Brčko from which young people are

leaving. People my age here probably think that they will spend their retirement traveling abroad to see their children. Instead, I should see a dynamic city with young people, start-up companies, waterfront, foreign companies, good infrastructure – and all that is possible in the next four to five years.