Platform for dialogue

Developing a renewed platform for dialogue will make it possible to let dialogue and reconciliation into the light in Bosnia and Herzegovina, High representative Valentin Inzko said today.

Speaking at a conference organised in Sarajevo by the Max Planck Foundation, the High Representative said authentic dialogue must include “those who – in one way or another – are inclined to look to the past, those who still fall back on the nationalist rhetoric that produced the conflict, those who have not yet embraced the idea of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a common home for all its people.”

He said “the beginning of the road to dialogue” is to glimpse the fear and anxiety that makes people speak and act as they do. “Dialogue isn’t based on accepting the other person’s point of view; it’s based on recognising that point of view and trying to understand where it comes from. Without this dialogue, there won’t be reconciliation – the reconciliation that this country needs if it is to move forward.”

The High Representative said BiH citizens do not need to be taught about dialogue and reconciliation – “they could teach the rest of Europe a thing or two about how to do this.” But he added that “what they do need is space” and that the International Community can provide and maintain “a platform for dialogue” to make this possible.

He said such a platform would allow citizens to ask “What

needs to change for me to view my neighbour in a different way?”

“The truth is that many of this country’s leaders have talked a lot – often in a decidedly unconstructive way – and delivered little. But Bosnia and Herzegovina is not its leaders. Bosnia and Herzegovina is its people,” the High Representative said. “And its people are extraordinary. I believe that a new – or renewed – platform for dialogue can allow this native genius to flourish. Reconciliation addresses open wounds. It addresses hatred and bitterness. This is not easy but it is necessary and I believe we can maintain a platform on which that difficult but necessary dialogue can take place. This would be an important step forward on the long path to deep and lasting reconciliation.”

The High Representative said the International Community will ensure that the Dayton Peace Agreement is implemented and that “those who seek to transform resentment and anxiety into a political program” are prevented from doing so. He said the International Community “will protect the space in which authentic dialogue takes place – dialogue that acknowledges fear and anxiety but does not give into them; dialogue that embraces different points of view but at the same time reflects the genius of BiH society to sustain cooperation and see possibilities in often unpromising circumstances.”

The full text of the High Representative’s speech can be accessed at www.ohr.int.