

High Representative Inzko meets UN Secretary-General Guterres



Following his semi-annual address to the UN Security Council (UNSC), the High Representative, Valentin Inzko, spoke yesterday via video call with the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres. The High Representative presented the highlights of his report to the UNSC and discussed the current political affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with an emphasis on the upcoming local elections and the country's efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The High Representative underlined that 25 years after the Dayton Peace Agreement, it is high time to start closing the open wounds caused by the war in BiH: "Positive and forward-looking rhetoric and actions must replace divisive agendas – as reconciliation and mutual respect is the only way to build better lives for all the citizens of the country."

To this end, the High Representative underscored the adoption of the Revised War Crimes Processing Strategy by the BiH Council of Ministers which regulates that the most serious war crimes cases should be prioritized for prosecution and completion by 2023. The High Representative added that coordination, cooperation and a disciplined approach by the judicial institutions in BiH will determine the success of the new strategy, and that he is hopeful of the outcome.

The High Representative also noted that authorities in BiH have aimed at focusing their efforts on protecting the economy while also preparing for the 2020 Local Elections. "The pandemic has once more underscored a longstanding problem in BiH, with some politicians pursuing divisive political agendas at the expense of a unified effort to contain the spread of the virus and prevent the economic fallout. This crisis has also exposed BiH's dependence on international assistance, reflecting the failure of political elites to focus on real issues that matter to BiH citizens," said the High Representative.

He also stressed that, "now more than ever, at a time when BiH is in the midst of a global pandemic in addition to the refugee crisis, while trying to preserve and strengthen its economy, the authorities must live up to their commitment to build a peaceful and viable state that is irreversibly on the course of Euro-Atlantic integration," added the High Representative.

As a positive development of the past few months, the High Representative noted the landmark domestic agreement, achieved with the assistance of international partners, to amend the BiH Election Law and enable the holding of local elections and thus the affirmation of the minimum standards of democracy in Mostar for the first time since 2008.