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

Ceremony marking the 22nd anniversary of Brčko District – Brčko, 8 March 2022

Mr. Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and leaders from all segments of the Brčko District community, but most importantly citizens of the District who are watching, congratulations on the Brčko District Day, and congratulations on International Women's Day.

Last year, at this event, I said it was too early to convey a celebratory message as the output from the reforms to get Brčko back on track after a decade of poor governance and mismanagement were not yet visible. Today, I can say the positive changes are coming into focus.

The budget process is becoming more transparent. As a result, public funds no longer find their way to fake NGOs to leverage votes and support private interests. Those who partook in these kickback schemes are being investigated and prosecuted. The law must apply to everyone equally.

In addition, decisions in the Assembly are no longer taken in urgent procedure based on backroom deals. Instead, they are handled in normal procedure allowing for public discussion.

Also, for the first time, the opposition is sitting on the Assembly's Commissions, including soon the Budget Commission. This too is good. But let's be clear, all parties, be they in the majority or in the opposition, were a part of the decade of poor governance I mentioned. Today, they must all be a part of building the future.

But the truly inspirational news for this special day in Brčko is that the transformational changes to align the District on a trajectory to a bright future are now visible. Namely, establishing Brčko District as a multimodal transportation nexus connecting BiH to the markets of the EU and Western Balkans.

This month the Council of Ministers will approve the agreement between BiH and Croatia to reconstruct the Brčko-Gunja bridge. Also, a conceptual understanding now exists between Brčko and the entities on how to proceed with the two highways that will intersect in the District, including that these routes will not disrupt the bypass nor any of the District's major new investments. The presence of the latter affirms the appeal of Brčko as a transportation hub, which means good private sector jobs.

As for the Port segment, the modern plateau has been built, the new crane will be delivered in the fall, tripling the handling capacity, and the final component, the new rail and road access points, is being finalized.

Also, this month the Brčko authorities are proceeding with the remediation and closure of the city landfill and its replacement with a state-of-the-art waste management facility. Demining is on track to ensure Brčko is cleared of mines by 2024. New laws on energy efficiency and renewable energy sources will create jobs tied to the private local production of clean energy, complementing the ongoing energy efficiency retrofitting of public buildings. Indeed, Brčko is one of just four BiH cities that have qualified for the EBRD Green Cities

initiative.

I applaud the joint statement of the District's leadership last year on 22nd December in which all that I just said was highlighted as the collective objective of Brčko, to be achieved together in this truly integrated, multi-ethnic community. However, for these reforms to be sustainable, there must be an unambiguous shift to a policy of zero tolerance of corruption and an end to patronage and nepotism in the civil service and public companies.

As the Brčko District Supervisor, I take my mandate to ensure the implementation of the Final Award very seriously; thus, I cannot accept anything less, and nor should you. This summer the Anti-Corruption Office will begin reviewing the professional files of public employees. Those who were hired without the requisite qualifications have no place in the public administration. The Commission for Assessing Conflict of Interest is already processing cases, and the Police and the Prosecutor's Office will continue to shift more resources to focus on combating corruption in the District.

The key preventive measure will be the Assembly's adoption of a new law on civil service being drafted by the government in partnership with the EU and the OHR. It will create a rightsized public administration that strictly abides by the principles of competency, accountability, and efficiency.

There is no question the District's robust budget is sufficient to meet all these goals. This past month, I discussed with your elected officials steps to ensure that Brčko's unique budget posture is used to advance the interests and wellbeing of the community – not party interests, and not personal interests, but the interest of the community as a whole.

Dear citizens, your elected leadership and political parties in the Assembly say they are committed to achieving the Brčko

District that I just described. A community in which all of you can comfortably and securely live, work, and raise your families. Therefore, I will come to Brčko as frequently as necessary, along with Brčko’s donor partners, to assist the District authorities, and with the entities playing their role as defined by the Final Award, to see this objective realized.

The District was not meant to be just a model of coexistence and mutual respect, but also a model of shared prosperity. It is time to lock in Brčko’s irreversible path to a bright future.

Thank you.