

Speech by the PDHR and Brčko Supervisor Louis Crishock at the Brčko District 25th Anniversary ceremony



Drage Brćanke i Brćaci, dragi gosti,

Let me begin today by sharing the best wishes of High Representative Christian Schmidt for a successful and productive celebration of Brčko District Day. Moreover, I am taking this opportunity to congratulate all the women of Brčko, and all of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the occasion of International Women's Day, tomorrow, March 8.

Quarter of a century of Brčko District – it is not a small thing!

Congratulations to you all!

This milestone anniversary is the perfect moment not only to celebrate the District's achievements but also to dream dreams and to chart a path for its future.

Today Brčko stands as an example of what is possible when constituent peoples, national minorities, and Others come together to build a common life and a prosperous future through joint effort.

This history of joint effort provides hope and expectations

among citizens. Citizens of Brčko expect transparency, accountability, and concrete progress from their government.

Their expectations deserve to be met with dedicated and responsible leadership.

It is essential that Brčko authorities remain focused on the District's progress and do not allow political tensions from elsewhere to spill over here. The District's leadership has always shown a commitment to working together in the interest of all citizens, and that must continue regardless of the current political challenges.

Brčko's status was determined through the Final Award and Amendment One to the BiH Constitution, which established it as a neutral, multi-ethnic district under the sovereignty of BiH, with equal access and representation for all communities.

It is, however, important to remember, as I recently stated, that the Tribunal retains jurisdiction over Brčko until such time as the Final Award is declared fully implemented.

Paragraphs 13 and 67 of the Final Award make this abundantly clear, leaving no room for misinterpretation. Presiding Arbiter Ambassador Clint Williamson, and I remain committed to making sure the Final Award is upheld.

The task for the District leadership – the government, assembly, and civil service is to preserve Brčko as a place of opportunity rather than division, by staying true to their declared priorities: stability, good governance, and economic development.

The District is capable to act swiftly and effectively in times of need – you demonstrated it with the rapid launch of repairs on the Gunja Bridge, showcasing the agility and commitment to overcome hurdles.

Similarly, the ongoing efforts to complete the demining of the

District are a fine example of cooperation of local and national leaders with international partners. I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone involved in this vital work. These efforts are building a stronger, more secure future for all of you.

Your education system is also a testament to Brčko's multiethnic character and vision of an inclusive society. Students who study together, grow together, and can live together. Quality education is critical to ensure that Brčko's young people develop and are trained for the challenges they will face as citizens and in the workforce of the future.

Brčko is blessed geographically, with rich agricultural land, a port on Europe's largest river network, and the potential to anchor critical regional highway networks.

The District must continue to solidify its position as a vital transportation hub, enhancing connectivity and opportunities for growth, including through completing necessary work on its spatial plan that will enable the construction of regional highway networks to commence.

Last year's successful pilot project introducing new election technology across all polling stations represents another significant milestone—enhancing transparency, building trust, and setting a new standard for electoral process in the country.

The recently elected Assembly and Government have recognized the challenges ahead. The implementation of their clear and ambitious strategy to combat corruption, reform public administration, and improve civil services will be essential for ensuring that all citizens see a future for themselves in Brčko.

There is a lot on your to-do list, for sure.

The efforts to increase economic growth, attract investment,

provide transparent budgeting, improve healthcare, and develop infrastructure are crucial for retaining young people and ensuring that Brčko remains a place of opportunity.

A sizeable to-do list?

Yes.

Achievable?

Of course.

That is an achievement worth striving for, through collaboration, you can not only create a success story but also inspire others to follow your lead. You have a unique opportunity to lead by example and be an engine of hope for citizens all over Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Let us all remember that while progress has been made, lasting change comes through sustained action, and tireless effort.

Though the tasks before you are sizeable, you are not alone in this work. International partners continue supporting Brčko as you work to reach your full potential.

I'll never get tired of repeating how truly inspiring it is to see that cooperation, coexistence, and shared development are possible.

You make it possible.

Every day.

Living in an integrated and inclusive community is more than just residing side by side- it is about truly building a shared future.

I have no doubt that Brčko will continue to rise to the occasion.

I look forward to witnessing its transformation: a bright

future IS possible and IS within reach.

Thank you.

