

Dnevni avaz: Principal Deputy High Representative in BiH Louis Crishock – Brčko is inseparable from BiH

By Nerma Ajnadžić

Principal Deputy High Representative and Supervisor for the Brčko District Louis Crishock has extensive experience when it comes to our country, given that he has previously held positions in the countries of the Western Balkans.

He took office in August 2024 and has not given a single interview to the domestic media to date. He spoke exclusively to “Dnevni avaz” about the Brčko District, the economic and political situation, infrastructure projects, but also interethnic and political cooperation that can be an example for the rest of the state of BiH.

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Dnevni avaz: What are your assessments of the current political and economic situation in the Brčko District, and what are the key priorities?

Supervisor Crishock: When it comes to the political and economic situation in Brčko, I am optimistic. I think that

Brčko has many opportunities and many chances offered to it, not only because of its history to date, but also because Brčko is a place where we have a history of successful cooperation between representatives of the three constituent peoples and others. In addition, Brčko is located at a geographical crossroads, that is, it is a place that is a hub when it comes to the Western Balkans in terms of its connectivity, not only through river transport but also road communications, and I would add its railway connectivity as well. So, I think Brčko has great opportunities. However, it is now up to its leadership, to the people in leadership positions, to seize these opportunities and the chances they have in order to turn them into a truly realistic and real success that will ensure that we also have private sector growth, job creation, and employment, and in that way actually meet the expectations of the voters in Brčko and in that way show that Brčko is a multiethnic, functional entity that is operating successfully.

Dnevni avaz: Brčko is considered an example of interethnic and political cooperation. How can this legacy be preserved and strengthened?

Supervisor Crishock: The way to preserve and strengthen such a history of multiethnic cooperation in Brčko is to view it as democracy, or rather a democratic society, is to view it as something that must be built upon and worked on daily. It can build on what has been done and undertaken in the past. However, it is really the task of the leaders who are in leadership positions today to deepen and expand what has been achieved and to actually move forward in that sense in order to actually ensure that this whole concept goes a step forward. And to proceed through cooperation and coordination, or rather cooperation between the executive and legislative branches of government. And when we talk about the legislative branches of government, I mean cooperation between the parties in power and the parties in opposition to ensure that

representatives of all three constituent peoples and others have the appropriate role to play within the government and the tasks entrusted to them.

When government institutions, or when different parties, show how they can successfully communicate and cooperate in order to solve the problems that citizens have, I think that is the right way to show how this model of cooperation that we have in Brčko can be even more successful and stronger, or how it can serve as a practice that will be applied by other government bodies at other levels in BiH.

Dnevni avaz: Infrastructure development is an issue that we have been dealing with for a long time. What are the key projects that the Brčko District should prioritize?

Supervisor Crishock: I think here we are again returning to the issue of seizing the opportunities that are offered. I think that the new Government and the Assembly, which were established after the elections last fall, have managed to establish an extremely dynamic plan to go towards achieving what they have planned. These are plans to make major improvements in society. Here, among other things, I am thinking of the transport network, improving health services, but also improving things that concern the daily lives of citizens, such as, for example, improving parks and ensuring better opportunities for recreation. The leaders, primarily of the Assembly and the Government, the mayor together with the chairman of the Assembly and the relevant heads of departments from the Brčko District Government, need to implement the plans that they have made. They have come up with a strategy that should ensure the implementation of the activities that have been planned.

Dnevni avaz: What is your message to the citizens of Brčko regarding the steps being taken to improve governance and the economic situation?

Supervisor Crishock: My message to the citizens of Brčko is to be well informed, to follow what is happening, to actively participate, to ask their authorities what their plans are and then to monitor how the implementation or realization of those plans is going and, in that way, to follow up on the obligations of the authorities. Government is a team effort; it is not a separate enterprise. To be a successful leader, regardless of whether you come from the legislative or executive branches of government, you must be in constant contact with the citizens you lead, to actually hear from them what their needs are. I know that the authorities have this ability, and they understand much better than we do, that it is necessary to be in constant contact with the citizens. I think they have the ability to maintain this contact continuously.

Dnevni avaz: What lessons can BiH, or rather the rest of the country, learn from the Brčko governance model?

Supervisor Crishock: The most important lesson that the rest of BiH can learn is that the example of Brčko shows what can be done when representatives of different parties, representing the three constituent peoples and Others, work together and when there is cooperation between them. This is something that we would like to see in the rest of BiH, and which is the reality that they live in Brčko every day. You have students who go to school together, who come from different constituent peoples, you have representatives of political parties, representatives of different constituent peoples who also work together. This is the way things work in Brčko. This tradition of multiethnic cooperation that exists in Brčko at the moment offers some hope and is a sign that this kind of cooperation is possible in other places. And when this tradition goes hand in hand with other concrete developments, such as economic progress, the creation of new jobs, the creation of opportunities for young people to stay in Brčko and to continue working there and build their future, then Brčko can

be not only a sign of hope for everyone else, but it can be concrete proof that such things can happen in other parts of BiH.

In that case, Brčko becomes the engine of hope, and hope is something you can't have too much of. We usually don't have enough of it. When you really have that kind of engine of hope, that's what shows us that we can keep going.

Dnevni avaz: Brčko is under the sovereignty of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the issue of its status has been and is being raised. How do you comment on that?

Supervisor Crishock: The only thing I would say here is to repeat something I said a few days ago, which is to remind the leaders of BiH that, according to the provisions of the Final Award and according to the first amendment adopted to the Constitution of BiH, the Brčko District is inextricably linked to BiH. The Brčko District exists under the sovereignty of BiH and is linked to the institutions of BiH. And threats to the institutions of BiH and the constitutional order of BiH could call into question the provisions contained in the Final Award, the Brčko Arbitration Award.

I am in constant contact with the presiding arbitrator. He is familiar with and aware of the situation, and he takes the threats that exist seriously. However, I would urge everyone to avoid taking any activities or moves that would call into question or jeopardize the provisions of the Final Award. The Brčko model is, quite clearly, a model that works, and it works successfully. I would really hate to see anything, any action, measure or threat from any part of BiH or outside BiH that would question or create a risk to both the provisions of the Final Award and the very model that the Brčko District represents. I think that is something that no one would like to see.

Dnevni avaz: How do you comment on all the developments that

followed the verdict of the Court of BiH against the President of the RS, Milorad Dodik?

Supervisor Crishock: In my capacity as Supervisor for Brčko, I think that what I could say in response to that question goes beyond the scope of my competence. I think that the question is something that you could rather address to the High Representative or to some other international official. I would just like to say briefly that the decisions of the Court must be respected and that it is not up to officials, including people like me, to comment on those decisions, but our task is only to respect the decisions of the Court

Dnevni avaz: How do you assess the cooperation between local and state governments so far in solving infrastructure challenges?

Supervisor Crishock: We have seen examples of this successful cooperation in the past. When it was determined that the structure of the Brčko Gunja Bridge was not safe enough to ensure the safe flow of traffic over the bridge, the Brčko authorities immediately responded appropriately. They immediately established cooperation with the state-level authorities and, on this basis, decided to close the bridge to vehicle traffic. This was all done with the intention of ensuring the safety of citizens, both in Brčko and those who may be visiting the District. In coordination with state institutions, the Brčko authorities also developed a plan that includes urgent repairs that need to be made to the bridge to ensure that traffic can flow on the bridge after these repairs, or that traffic can continue to flow within a period of three months.

Dnevni avaz: How important is the vision and commitment of local leadership in the implementation of key projects for Brčko?

Supervisor Crishock: To develop a plan, to define and

elaborate it, you need a vision. However, to implement it and bring it to completion, you really need to make great efforts and work on their implementation day after day. I believe that the Mayor, the President of the Assembly and their deputies, together with the heads of departments of the Brčko District Government, as well as people employed in the civil service, have enough abilities and strength to bring these plans to fruition.