

Responding to the Actual Needs of Citizens

Fifteen years after Brcko District was established, the District's institutions are working, and citizens are able to enjoy greater security. Many of them are seeing a measure of prosperity and we must continue to work to ensure that there are employment opportunities for all the citizens of the District, High Representative Valentin Inzko said today, speaking in Brcko at an event organized to mark the District's anniversary.

"The task facing representatives of the people of Brcko – the same task facing representatives of citizens throughout the country – is to expand the present level of success, so that living standards begin to rise much more quickly and much more substantially," he said.

The High Representative said that the achievements made in Brcko in the past demonstrate that success is possible – in Brcko and in Bosnia and Herzegovina – but he added that in recent years, reforms in the District have stalled and there must be a renewed commitment to make further progress.

"Like the rest of the country, the District faces real problems. I don't need to remind anyone that corruption has repeatedly emerged as one of the main concerns of citizens, and the Brcko institutions have had mixed success in dealing with this," he said. "And despite the fact that Brcko has consistently performed better than the rest of the country economically – especially by exploiting the commercial advantages of its position on the Sava – dissatisfaction among certain parts of the population with low living standards compared to neighbouring countries has been as pronounced here as elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

The High Representative also called for a change in political approach.

"In the past, Brcko often provided an example of what can be done in this country when challenges that seemed almost insurmountable were addressed with imagination and determination," he said. "The institutions created in Brcko District have made it possible to address strategic challenges in ways that are practical and effective – and that respond to the actual needs of citizens. That's not a bad model for the rest of the country, if political parties work together to make life better for all residents in the District. Especially today, when – more than ever – there is a clear and pressing need for fresh political ideas."

The full text of the High Representative's speech is available on the OHR website.