

Op-ed by High Representative: Use your ultimate power and determine your own destiny

By Valentin Inzko

This year, Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced the worst floods the country has seen for a century, which resulted in terrible hardship for the people in affected communities.

Several months earlier, we witnessed widespread demonstrations and civil unrest in response to extraordinarily difficult social and economic situation that exists in many local communities and affects many citizens. Citizens have also pointed at a growing divide between a small ruling elite and the average citizen. All this has taken place against the backdrop of a failure in Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to keep pace with the rest of the region as it advances towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Regardless of different political views or which part of the country they come from, there is hardly a person I have met who does not share my view that there must be a fundamental change in the way politics is conducted after the elections so that we see the major challenges faced by the country and its citizens, such as the rampant unemployment and corruption being tackled decisively.

The good news is that on October 12 there is an opportunity to get the country moving again – in the right direction.

People often ask me if I plan to use the Bonn powers to solve a problem or remove some obstacle in this country. I tell them – on October 12, you have a chance to use your powers as citizens, your Bonn powers, which is also your basic democratic right!

Therefore, the key question is who is going to be entrusted to deliver the progress you demand?

That will be decided not by me or the international community or by some politicians behind closed doors.

This will be decided by you!

On October 12 the future – what happens in the next four years – will be decided by you alone.

So what should you be looking for? I believe you should be looking for clear and concrete answers to how your priorities, your problems, are going to be addressed.

So if unemployment is your major concern demand clear answers on how new jobs are going to be created in your local community. How are the opportunities for growth in your community going to be utilised, not to make ruling elites richer, but rather to create sustainable jobs for the unemployed. If candidates and parties are serious about the next four years then they must provide answers to questions like this.

Things can be changed on October 12, but only if you take responsibility for your future and your destiny by voting.

Many of you complain that you do not have anyone to vote for because all of the parties or candidates seem basically the same.

My response to that is blunt, that simply is not true!

You have a wide choice and there are politicians who want to serve citizens and to take the country forwards. Some parties are right of centre, some are left of centre, some parties have been in government, some have not, etc. Of course you will do what voters do in all countries – differentiate between politicians who have kept their promises and those who have not.

If problems are going to be solved during the next four years, then we need to see more problem solvers being elected. The election campaign is the time when voters need to identify them – by demanding clear answers from candidates and political parties *how* they are going to *credibly* deal with the problems you face.

I know there is huge frustration. This is completely understandable when you look at the difficulties this country and its people have had to deal with for so long – for citizens to throw up their hands in the air and say: “Nothing will change no matter what I do.”

But there is also an opportunity to get the country moving again and you can be sure of one thing: nothing will change if you do not vote!

Your vote does count and it is vital – but that is only the case if you use it. If you do not vote, somebody else will determine your fate for you.

Don’t let others determine your fate and the fate of your children!

On October 12 the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be in the spotlight when they have the chance to exercise their democratic right and their collective authority which far exceeds any other authority in the country.

I urge you to seize this opportunity – vote on October 12 and determine your own destiny. Otherwise, have no doubt that someone else will decide on your future.