Citizens Are Offering Their Own Solutions

Check Against Delivery

Remarks by High Representative Valentin Inzko
To the European Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Sarajevo, 7 May 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The political landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina has changed since we last celebrated Europe Day. Civil society in this country is finding its voice and this will surely resonate with the European Movement, which has been a pioneer in bringing communities – including those beyond the main towns and cities – into the forum of public debate.

You have disseminated information and elicited an active response among citizens who in many cases may not be politically engaged and who may not be receiving a complete picture of the European integration process from newspapers and TV.

You have worked effectively and energetically to foster grassroots understanding of European integration – what it means and how it can transform this country – and by doing that you have boosted popular support for the process.

The process, as we know, has encountered political setbacks in the last twelve months. International partners have worked with BiH party leaders to reach agreement that would remove obstacles, but agreement has been elusive.

In contrast, ordinary citizens have come together – across political, geographic and community lines – to offer creative and dynamic solutions to some of the challenges the country is

facing.

As we celebrate Europe Day this year I believe we are witnessing the emergence of a new political and social paradigm in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this new paradigm citizens will take the initiative and political leaders will be obliged to follow.

This truly reflects the democratic principles of the European Union

- Where citizens are protected – not intimidated – by the police and the courts;
- Where citizens are served – not bullied – by the bureaucracy;
- Where citizens have full and free access to media – including new and dynamic online media – that hold leaders to account for their actions.

We are in challenging times, and it would be easy to be disheartened – but I believe that a basic shift is underway that can in the long run push aside the obstacles to progress.

I would like to congratulate the European Movement on its efforts to take the message of European integration to every part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, asserting the basic and important fact that the citizens of this country have the same right to a prosperous and secure future as citizens everywhere else in Europe.

The four million citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina will benefit – and benefit hugely – when the European perspective is transformed from an aspiration to a reality. If BiH politicians can’t deliver European integration, then the people themselves will deliver it.

Thank you