

Cooperative Diplomacy Delivers Dividends



Diplomacy in Central Europe over the last twenty years, including diplomacy between the Czech Republic and Slovakia, offers a successful example of how countries can face new challenges by developing constructive bilateral and multilateral ties, High Representative Valentin Inzko said in Prague today.

The High Representative was speaking at an international conference marking twenty years of Czech and Slovak diplomacy, where he shared his own recollection of the period following the end of communism in Czechoslovakia and the peaceful separation of the country's two component parts.

"From the very beginning there was an emphasis on cooperation," he said. "The new foreign ministries and their respective diplomatic services worked to advance the interests of the new states and they were quick to identify areas where this could be done through constructive cooperation. That cooperative diplomacy delivered dividends."

The High Representative said that after a long period in which diplomatic relations in the Western Balkans had been characterized by mistrust, a new and more constructive diplomacy had begun to emerge in the last three or four years.

"There is a common aspiration to join the European Union," he said, "and there are valuable ties of culture, language and

economy. Prague and Bratislava demonstrated how such ties can be used productively without undermining the integrity of new states, and that is what we are now beginning to see in the Western Balkans.”

The High Representative said Bosnia and Herzegovina has a clear diplomatic agenda, to join the European Union and NATO, but because of political blockages it is making slower progress than the majority of its citizens want.

Other conference speakers included Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, Slovak Foreign Minister and former High Representative Miroslav Lajcak, and former UK Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd.

Valentin Inzko helped established the Austrian Cultural Institute and the Austrian High School in Prague in 1992/93. He was also active in raising awareness about events in former Yugoslavia at the time, organizing an exhibition in Prague on the humanitarian work then being carried out by the Jewish Community in Sarajevo. The exhibition was opened by President Vaclav Havel.

Photo: OHR archive