

Slobodna Bosna: Interview with HR Valentin Inzko

By Suzana Mijatović

After his latest report on the situation in BiH, presented before the UN Security Council last week, the High Representative Valentin Inzko came under fiercest criticism seen so far from domestic politicians. As expected, the first statements came from the RS President Milorad Dodik, who said that the High Representative is the greatest threat to the Dayton Agreement, followed by HDZ leader Dragan Čović and his claim that the OHR is primarily to blame for the current situation in the FBiH. In an interview for Slobodna Bosna, the High Representative explained that the OHR's report was based on facts about the situation in BiH, categorically denied any pressure on judges of the BiH Constitutional Court coming from him or his associates, and announced which topics will dominate the next PIC session.

Slobodna Bosna: Can you, for a start, sum up the results of your stay in New York and reactions after you submitted your report on the situation in BiH to the UNSC?

Valentin Inzko: The key result of my address to the UN Security Council was the adoption of Resolution 2074 (2012). Through this Resolution, the UN Security Council once more extended the mandate of EUFOR and reiterated its full support for the High Representative's continued role in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the HR's authorities under Annex 10, including the right to make binding decisions. In the very same Resolution, the UN SC sent an important message to BiH politicians that the BiH authorities bear the primary responsibility for the further successful implementation of the Peace Agreement, which among other tasks extends to strengthening joint institutions which foster the building of a fully functioning self-sustaining State, able to integrate itself into the European structures.

Slobodna Bosna: Were you surprised by the negative reactions from Republika Srpska and criticisms of you that came from Milorad Dodik?

Valentin Inzko: No, I was not surprised but – disappointed, yes. Disappointed by the vehemence, the misrepresentations and the overarching statements presenting the High Representatives as the archenemies of Republika Srpska. I have nothing against the RS, on the contrary: for me the RS is one of the entities of this country, its citizens are citizens of this country. I think that the language used in some of the statements was offensive and disrespectful not only of my position but also of the office (position) of President of the RS.

Slobodna Bosna: The RS President called you a manipulator, biggest destroyer of the Dayton Agreement ever, and accused you of presenting a false report on the situation in BiH to the UN. What is your response to Dodik's accusations?

Valentin Inzko: My mandate is clearly defined by the Dayton Peace Agreement and my primary duty is to uphold that agreement. That is exactly what I do and I fulfill my obligations with my mandate and the future of this country in mind. In view of the responsibility invested in me, I give my assessment of the facts as they happen. If the political developments are positive, I report so. If they are negative I report that as well. This is what constitutes my report to the UN Security Council. It is not the fault of the mirror if the reflection is not as attractive as we all hoped.

The issue of open and growing advocacy for the dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina by RS officials has reached the point where it deserves the special attention of the international community. This has been at the heart of international community discussions about BiH for some time now and will also be discussed by the PIC when this body meets later in the month. Once again, I am reporting about facts. Were the situation to improve, it will be a pleasure for me to report on this.

Slobodna Bosna: Milorad Dodik claims that the OHR staff influenced the judges of the BiH Constitutional Court, in order to change the constitutional and legal order through court decisions. Since these are extremely grave accusations, could you please explain whether you or your colleagues had any contact with the judges of the BiH Constitutional Court, or directed their work in any way?

Valentin Inzko: No. Period. This is pure politically based fiction and an offense. I do not know them and it is my profound conviction and a fundamental part of our civilization that one does not try and influence the judiciary. Accordingly, OHR and the international community strongly oppose efforts to subject the judicial system in this country to political influences.

Slobodna Bosna: In parallel with your report, the Security Council also receives reports from Banja Luka, sent by the RS authorities. Do you know where they end up and whether anybody reads them?

Valentin Inzko: The only official report to the UN Security Council is the one coming from the High Representative. If Milorad Dodik sent a report to New York privately, then it is another proof that he is ignoring state institutions, such as the Presidency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Slobodna Bosna: The President of the HDZ of BiH, Dragan Čović, asked you to admit your mistake and withdraw the decision based on which the FBiH leadership was formed last year. Will you do that?

Valentin Inzko: It was not a mistake. In March 2011, following an unsuccessful mediation process, the international community stepped in with the full backing of the PIC SB to preserve the stability and functioning of institutions at entity level paralysed by an unconstitutional and politically motivated boycott of the Federation of the House of Peoples for 9 months and to allow FBiH Constitutional Court to rule on the constitutional issues that had been raised. However, the HDZ officials who had originally taken their case to the Constitutional Court subsequently withdrew their complaints, depriving the highest court in the Federation the opportunity to resolve this matter.

Slobodna Bosna: How will the representatives of the international community in BiH, in the first place the EU Special Representative Peter Sorensen and you, react if the leaders of the SDP and SNSD, together with their coalition partners, insist on implementing the solutions stated in the inter-party agreement. By that I mean the amendments to the Law on HJPC and Election Law of BiH, which, according to expert views, represent a step backwards?

Valentin Inzko: I would like to hope that the SNSD-SDP Agreement will be further defined as it develops into the programme of the future ruling coalition. During that process, I believe that political leaders will also take into account concerns expressed by international actors, including the OHR and the EU, who wish to assist the authorities in reaching their long-term goals and fulfill their obligations, both those already existing and those connected with those long-term goals. The agreement contains some matters that touch on my mandate and I have publicly stated that I will assess its implementation in light of the principles of democracy, good governance and rule of law, all of which are the heart of both the Peace Agreement and Bosnia and Herzegovina's Euro-Atlantic integration efforts.

Slobodna Bosna: Will, for example, the election of chief prosecutors by entity parliaments and/or cantonal assemblies place the future work of prosecutors under political control?

Valentin Inzko: The proposed changes to the HJPC Law of the SNSD-SDP agreement concerning prosecutorial appointments is one that both domestic and international actors have expressed concerns about because of its potential to diminish the independence of the judiciary. We need to see how the political agreement evolves and what legislative proposals come out of it before making a final judgment. But the principle espoused by the international community is the judicial system in this country must not be subjected to political influence and that such a development would not serve the long term objectives of this country.

Slobodna Bosna: Also, we have seen different interpretations in public of the conclusions reached in meetings in Brussels and messages of the Director General of the European Commission Directorate for Enlargement Stefan Sannino related to „Elektroprijenos BiH“. Did the European Commission, as stated by the Federation Prime Minister Nermin Nikšić, take the side of the share-holders in that company, i.e. the entity governments, and support the solutions from the SDP-SNSD agreement?

Valentin Inzko: I believe Director Sannino's opinion was very clear but be so kind as to refer to the European Commission for their account of the meeting and its outcome.

Slobodna Bosna: Will the OHR react if the Central Election Commission annuls the election results in Srebrenica, or if the SNSD continues with to boycott the elected mayor, Ćamil Duraković?

Valentin Inzko: Let us allow the procedure now underway before the competent domestic institutions to follow its course. I look forward to the CEC finalising the process of certification of the results as expeditiously as possible in line with the relevant legislation. Final certification of the municipal election results in Srebrenica will allow the elected political leadership to finally start working on issues of importance to Srebrenica residents.

Slobodna Bosna: Finally, one personal question, I hope I will not be impolite. Having in mind the speculations about your salary, can you tell us how big your salary is and which sources it is financed from?

Valentin Inzko: First of all, I should say that this issue is brought to the public's attention for different purposes. The figures appeared in the media are not true. The salary for the High Representative has not changed for the past 15 years. It was set at the same level as a Commissioner of the EU which underlines the value that the International Community puts on this post. It is not paid by a budget that would go to BiH but by the contributors of the PIC Steering Board to OHR's budget. Let us concentrate on how we can bring BiH irreversibly on its Euro-atlantic paths. Politicians, all politicians have only one task: how to solve the problems of citizens. This should be the main and daily question.