

Introductory Remarks by High Representative Valentin Inzko at a Concert to Mark the Tenth Anniversary of the Work of the Annex 8 Commission for the Protection of Cultural Monuments

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly pleased to participate in this event because the record of the Commission for the Protection of Cultural Monuments shows that the Dayton Settlement *can* work, and it can work for the benefit of *all* the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Today's event has been organised together with the European cultural organisation, Europa Nostra, which I believe testifies to the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina's cultural heritage is important not simply for the people of this country but for the people of Europe as a whole.

In 2010 the annual prize presented jointly by the EU and Europa Nostra (the cultural Oscar, as it has come to be known) was awarded to the BiH Commission for the Protection of Cultural Monuments.

The Commission was the only recipient of the award that year, and the citation highlighted the importance – for the whole of Europe – of this body's efforts to protect, restore and advance the country's cultural heritage.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's patrimony includes Muslim, Christian and Jewish art, architecture and literature – and reflects their interaction with one another – an interaction that has produced a unique European tradition of tolerance and creativity.

* * *

Yet Bosnia and Herzegovina's cultural heritage continues to be attacked by those who wish to repudiate it for ideological reasons. And when it is not under attack it suffers from neglect as a result of administrative or financial constraints.

A great European treasure of art, architecture and the printed word is being systematically degraded. Museums, galleries and libraries have been forced to close.

This is not a matter of concern only for academics and artists. It's a matter of concern for citizens from every community and from every part of the country because it is *their* heritage that is being lost. The institutions that preserve that heritage must not be allowed to fail.

* * *

In the present election campaign we have heard familiar mantras about the threat from other communities and the inevitability – even the desirability – of division.

But all of us know that there is in Bosnia and Herzegovina a much older, a much richer tradition of confidence, of tolerance and of pluralism. It is this tradition that is reflected in the cultural heritage that the Commission has been mandated by the Dayton Peace Agreement to protect.

The debate about culture and about cultural monuments is not simply about museums or libraries or mosques or churches. It is about the soul of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that is a soul worth saving.

Thank you