Anadolu Agency: Interview with High Representative

Anadolu Agency: Local politicians keep BiH blocked and hamper, to a maximum extent, its path to the EU and NATO. Do you see a way out of the existing stalemate?

Valentin Inzko: The only way forward is dialogue and compromise. Certainly there are some very concerning trends currently in BiH. At the same time we are in an election period. Given their poor performance over recent months it is not surprising that some less scrupulous politicians are using the zero-sum politics of the past to galvanize their support. However, these elections and the election campaign should be about the services local government can provide to citizens and how local authorities can play their part in addressing the issues citizens are most concerned about: unemployment and corruption. It is on these issues that I hope people will determine how they vote a month from now.

Anadolu Agency: Does BiH have a future without the EU and NATO?

Valentin Inzko: Yes, of course, BiH has been a sovereign state since 1992, when it joined the UN, and will remain so. The real question is why any domestic politician would deny the citizens of this country the benefits which membership confers? BiH has already proclaimed EU and NATO membership as overarching goals. The people of this country want change and they want better living standards. There is no credible alternative. How long the road to membership will take depends on this country's political leaders. At the moment it seems that they are willing to make people wait.

Anadolu Agency: BiH is already lagging behind in fulfilling its obligations deriving from the Road Map accepted by local

political leaders. Are deadlines going to be extended, especially the one for the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci ruling?

Valentin Inzko: I am not in a position to speak about the deadlines contained in the Road Map. Let me just say that it is discouraging to see BiH lagging behind on the road to membership as the other countries in the region move forward. I want the best for this country and its people, but I cannot and will not substitute for the elected leaders. The focus is on them. BiH leaders need to show credible results. In implementing EU standards the lives of citizens will be improved in a huge variety of ways. Surely this is what politics should be about.

Anadolu Agency: Are additional changes to the Constitution going to be made, so BiH can function as a normal state? Do you support the idea of re-composition of the Federation of BiH and a reduction of the number of Cantons?

Valentin Inzko: Yes, in principle, making the Federation system simpler, cheaper and more efficient with equal protection for all is something that we have always supported and I see no reason why someone would object to these principles.

Anadolu Agency: In your opinion, who is responsible for the fact that some six to seven years ago BiH used to be ahead of Serbia and Montenegro, in terms of its fulfillment of the EU-related obligation, but it is now significantly lagging behind those two countries?

Valentin Inzko: The overwhelming responsibility is with political leaders of this country. They have said they want to take responsibility for this country's future, and the International Community took the decision that less interventionism was required. The EU has said many times, very clearly and without ambiguity, that it supports the country's

aspirations to join the club. Politicians must realize that their verbal support to this must give way to concrete actions.

Anadolu Agency: Are perpetual political crises in BiH created deliberately by some power centers in order to prove that BiH is incapable of functioning?

Valentin Inzko: I believe that some have a policy aim of fracturing BiH and their actions and statements are designed to move the country in that direction. Others do not share this agenda but are unable to move beyond narrow political interests and work for the interests of the whole of BiH. But rest assured that the international community remains committed and gives its full support to the absolute sovereignty and territorial integrity of BiH and it will continue to do so.

Anadolu Agency: Do Bosniak politicians bear the greatest responsibility, considering that ever since the elections political crises have been taking place in the Federation only?

Valentin Inzko: Responsibility is never one sided. At the same time, I will not hide my disappointment that after so many months had already been lost after the 2010 elections, some politicians chose to revert to inter-party squabbling rather than to roll up their sleeves and get to work.

Anadolu Agency: Is there a plan on the part of the international community as to what to do with BiH if it fails to fulfill the requirements for the EU and NATO accession, and how do you comment statements by experts and analysts that the America and Europe had deliberately drafted Dayton's BiH with a limited span of existence?

Valentin Inzko: This is nonsense. Dayton may not be perfect but it provides the framework in which this country for many years managed to make significant progress. The last six years

have not gone so well. Further changes to the BiH Constitution will take place. We will reach a point where politicians see that it is in the interests of all to make the country as a whole more functional. This evolution was foreseen in Dayton, the provisions to change the BiH Constitution were clearly set, and this is what I expect to happen.

Anadolu Agency: Are the Bonn powers definitely thing of the past?

Valentin Inzko: No. In legal terms, the Bonn powers stand unchanged. However, their significance recedes the more politicians take responsibility for addressing issues of importance to their citizens and moving the country forward and of course the more they show they are capable of respecting the Peace Agreement. It is true that the Bonn Powers have been used less and less frequently, but if necessary they are available to be used again.

Anadolu Agency: The Brčko Supervisor's Office has been closed down and its powers have been revoked. What will happen in case of a crisis and violations of the laws in the District?

Valentin Inzko: First, I would like to correct the wording of your question. The Supervisor's functions are suspended, not revoked, so legally they remain in place. It is entirely up to the Supervisor to determine whether he will need to use his powers again. Moreover, the High Representative, the Arbitral Tribunal and the BiH Constitutional Court all possess powers to safeguard the interests of the District and its residents, if necessary. And we of course also welcome the presence of international community actors such as EU, OSCE and EUFOR on the ground in the Brcko District. The PIC Steering Board and I are confident that the Brcko District authorities have the capacity and the will to resolve issues that arise.

Anadolu Agency: RS representatives openly advocate its secession from BIH. Several years ago such statements were

strictly sanctioned by the international community; at present we have just rather mild reactions. What has changed in the meantime?

Valentin Inzko: The challenges to BiH statehood from RS representatives have become systematic. Some leaders have questioned the importance of EU integration. The statements are coordinated and orchestrated; it is clear that this is more than just rhetoric; that these statements reflect policy. OHR issued clear statements in response, and there were very clear and robust statements also coming from the international community including both the US and the EU. My mandate is to uphold the Dayton Peace Agreement, and the DPA foresees no possibility of secession. I have made my views clear to the international community and they have undertaken to inform their capitals.

The time has come for politicians to look forward and not backwards. The international community wants to see the pace of Bosnia's Euro-Atlantic integration process accelerate, so yes, we're taking this very seriously and as High Representative I remain here to uphold and defend the Peace Agreement. Citizens don't need to worry and don't need not vote out of fear.

Anadolu Agency: Is BiH going to survive?

Valentin Inzko: Of course. Challenging Bosnia and Herzegovina's future as a sovereign country is futile and only serves to raise inter-ethnic tensions and to deter desperately needed foreign investment that is needed to create jobs. The question is not whether there will be a prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina working as one. The question is when we will reach this point.

Anadolu Agency: When do you expect the entire region to become part of the EU?

Valentin Inzko: This is a question you should direct to the

political leaders of this country. What is clear is that the current way of doing politics has delivered very little forward progress over the last six years and if they don't start pulling together and putting the people of this country first its is going to take a long time. I see the unutilized potential of this country every day and I see much scope for compromise politics that will deliver a better and brighter future for the people, regardless of where they live or what their name is.

Anadolu Agency: How do you assess the role of Turkey and Austria in BiH, as the former administrators of this country?

Valentin Inzko: Both Austria and Turkey are today significant political and economic partners of Bosnia and Herzegovina but also true friends of this country. Over two million people with Bosnian roots live in Turkey, and it is only natural that Turks feel emotional bonds with Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are also many Bosnians and Herzegovinians living in Austria. Politically, Turkey is a respected member of the Peace Implementation Council, representing the OIC, and, as such, it has proved on numerous occasions that it is a valued partner of Bosnia and Herzegovina and all of its people. If Bosnia and Herzegovina can get down to work, I can see a situation where investors from both countries will invest far more heavily than we have seen so far. We all know how critical it is to bring capital to the country to create new jobs.