Interview with HR/EUSR Valentin Inzko

Oslobodjenje: The most wanted war fugitive, the commander of the Republika Srpska Army, Ratko Mladic is finally in the Hague. What does that mean for Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Valentin Inzko: The arrest of Mladic enables justice to take its course. There is an obvious moral question as to what kind of justice there is for the crimes of the magnitude that Mladic accused of but we need to take solace in the fact that this shows that no one is untouchable or above the law and that such crimes will not be forgotten. Of course Mladic's arrest has deep and special meaning for the families of the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica and victims and survivors of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For them if for no other reason justice must be served and the truth found. Without truth and justice there is no trust or reconciliation.

For Bosnia and Herzegovina, the ICTY phase is slowly but surely coming to a conclusion though it does not mean the end in war crimes trials in general. Many others stand accused of war crimes and these individuals must be put on trial in the domestic courts. I will continue to work to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina's judiciary has all the support it needs in order to perform this task.

Oslobodjenje: Are you surprised by the reactions in Banja Luka on account of Mladic's arrest? Requests have already appeared for Republika Srpska not to withdraw the referendum decision, which actually just shows the essence of the referendum.What is your comment on these developments?

Valentin Inzko: Reactions are not as intense as perhaps we may have seen some years ago. At the same time the fact that anyone can support an individual in the way that we have seen at the demonstrations in Banja Luka, Belgrade and elsewhere, accused of such heinous and documented crimes is very difficult for me to comprehend. Yet despite the protests what I do see is a silent majority for

whom Mladic may have been a war hero but who are now aware of the scale and horror of the crimes of which he is and have chosen to leave the matter in the hands of the ICTY – where it belongs.

The only way I can conceptualise this is to put it into the context of my native Austria 15 years after the second world war, when the German authorities tried thousands of cases against former Nazis. Subsequent generations must know what crimes took place so that it would not happen ever again. Certainly there is an extreme fringe that may try to glorify the regime and the individuals that committed crimes but they are scorned upon by the vast majority of the population and politically their views are rejected as unacceptable.

Most certainly Mladic's arrest will favour reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina but also his arrest will give new impulse for better co-operation in the region. At the same time, I'm afraid that when political and civil leaders allow and even participate in the glorification of individuals accused of committing crimes then we move further away from something you might call reconciliation.

Oslobodjenje: Your Principal Deputy, Mr. Roderick Moore, on the day when Mladic was arrested, felt a need – as he explained – to lay down flowers in Potocari and meet with Mothers of Srebrenica. From BiH perspective, this is really a remarkable gesture of an international official. Does this gesture also announce a different, more direct and stronger engagement of the international community in our country?

Valentin Inzko: I applaud this personal act of paying respects to the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica and their families.

As far as the OHR goes, our engagement in Srebrenica speaks for itself. OHR has also worked closely with the ICTY and other organisations in the effort to apprehend ICTY indictees and destroy their support networks. Thus Mladic's arrest represents the culmination of many years of hard work by the many domestic and international organizations, including the OHR. Regarding the engagement of the international community in this country, this will continue at full capacity, with the OHR working side-by-side with a reinforced EU and other international partners to ensure that the Dayton Peace Agreement is respected and implemented and that BiH can continue on its path to the European Union and NATO.

Oslobodjenje: Europe has decided and chosen a representative to BiH. What does that mean for your office?

Valentin Inzko: Yes, Catherine Ashton has announced the appointment of Mr. Peter Sorensen as the new Head of Delegation. This appointment is in line with

the conclusions of the EU Foreign Ministers in March, which outlined that the EU will establish a reinforced, single EU representative in BiH, who will take the lead in supporting BiH on EU related matters. So the Head of the EU Delegation will also assume the functions of the EU Special Representatives once his appointment is finalized. The discussion on the new EUSR mandate will start soon among the EU member states and the new EUSR will be formally appointed in due course. As High Representative and as the current EU Special Representative I have been pushing for this single EU Representative in BiH and I am pleased that months of effort in finding the right person are now coming to fruition. Mr. Sorensen has an excellent knowledge of BiH and the Balkans, he served in the OHR in the late 90's and I look forward to working closely with him. Many details remain to be worked out but in broad strokes this means that I will stay on as High Representative in charge of Dayton issues while the European Union issues will rest with Mr Sørenesen in his capacity as Head of the EU Delegation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and EU Special representative in BiH.

Oslobodjenje: Recently you have wholeheartedly defended the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton from reisu-l-ulema Cerić. Can you explain to us what exactly Mrs. Ashton agreed upon in Banja Luka i.e. who will be those who will, in line with her agreement, discuss the work of the Court and Prosecutor's office of BiH in Banja Luka? Will there be representatives of the BiH Court and Prosecutor's office as well?

Valentin Inzko: We note that the immediate challenge to the Dayton Agreement in the form of the Referendum has now been removed thanks to the combined efforts of EU HR Ashton and the broader International Community. The OHR notes that the conclusions adopted on April 13 also represent a challenge to the Dayton Peace Agreement. My Office is currently reviewing the steps the RSNA took to assess the extent to which they have addressed the earlier conclusions

The question of structured dialogue should be addressed to the EUD. The role of OHR and PIC SBA will continue to be to ensure there is no rollback on reforms and that the DPA is being respected

Oslobodjenje: In the speech delivered in Blagaj, reisu-l-ulema Cerić – to put it this way – also publicly attacked Mrs. Vera Jovanović, the president of the BiH Helsinki Committee on account of the views of this NGO. Following that, the police have registered threats against Mrs. Jovanović, NGOs from BiH have reacted but also those from the world, but you have not.Why?

Valentin Inzko: My reaction was one of principle and comprehensive. It covered

it all, and I do not want to make any more comments on this topic. In any case, I did not have an intention to offend anyone, and I wish to repeat that once again.

Oslobodjenje: When will BiH get the state government and will your Office mediate in negotiations?

Valentin Inzko: There have been some encouraging signs with the final formation of the BH Parliament. I met Speakers Becirevic and Ljubic this week and I'm sure the Parliament is ready to get down to work. Government formation remains a difficult process. I hope the BiH Presidency will be able to move this issue forward this week. I hope that there will be an understanding that dialogue has no alternative because it is only the citizens of this country who are suffering economic hardship. While the global economic crisis has affected all of us, I am concerned that it has also become a bit of an excuse for lack of action. The fact is that foreign direct investment in BiH has collapsed (down in 2010 by 71.4 percent compared to 2009). Furthermore, Moody's international rating agency has recently changed its credit rating outlook on Bosnia and Herzegovina from stable to negative. The reason for their re-assessment is political instability in BiH. When rating agencies take a negative view, it makes it harder to persuade foreign investors to come here and create desperately needed new jobs. The Moody's decision may also lead to an increase in interest rates in the commercial banks operating in BiH. Again, a major blow to the country's economy and to the living standards of its citizens. The economy won't turn around unless the new authorities take steps to *turn* it around. That is why BiH needs a Council of Ministers now to address the economic situation and start proposing practical solutions to the problems that citizens face.

Oslobodjenje: Are you satisfied with the work of the FBiH Government? And the RS Government? Do you recognize in the activities of the entity governments the fight against crime and corruption? Do you recognize reform steps and who makes those?

Valentin Inzko: Let's be blunt: The economic and financial situation in both Entities is now very difficult. The failure by the Fiscal Council to adopt a Global Fiscal Framework for 2011 to 2013 is preventing the disbursements under the IMF Stand-by arrangement and the EU Macro-Financial Assistance – which is one reason the Entities are running out of money. The other reason is the lack of decisiveness and sense of urgency to implement comprehensive structural reforms, including those agreed to under the Stand-By Arrangement. In the Federation, the long and exhausting disagreement among political parties over government formation meant that steps to address the twin crisis – economic

recession and budget overspending – were put on hold. In the RS, privatisation money has been spent and because of this the RS is forced to find alternative solutions, such as seeking commercial loans in order to meet ordinary obligations like pension payments or raising the level of contributions and income tax. Still, these measures ultimately create a direct burden for all RS residents. I think real reform is yet to start and the sooner it does the better.

Oslobodjenje: The news on the come-back of the BiH soccer representation and local clubs to the international scene has been shadowed by Mladić's arrest. This is a big step of the Committee headed by the famous BiH soccer legend Ivica Osim. Is this a recipe or just an exception which confirms the rule that in BiH everything is a problem?

Valentin Inzko: I am very glad as suspension would have been deeply unfair. Ivica Osim only did what any normal person would do. However, this was both a historical feat and very hard work. I take my hat off. He's not a legend for nothing. He justified it once again. Well done Švabo! Now, whether the Football Federation is a model for the future is impossible to say now – but it would be excellent because that's what everybody wants. What I do know is that I will be supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina when they play Romania on Friday where at least the players will have a chance to show what they can do.