

Statement by High Representative Valentin Inzko On the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Initial Signing Of the General Framework Agreement on Peace in BiH



Success is Possible

Fifteen years after Dayton, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina want to be able to look to the future with optimism.

With the 3 October general election behind us, BiH politics has the opportunity to shift away from the noisy rhetoric of campaign debate and focus on dealing with the real challenges citizens face.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's neighbors have distanced themselves from the arid chauvinism of the past and are actively seeking to develop a cooperative environment from which every country in the region can benefit.

Meanwhile, the European Union is working proactively to help all countries of the Western Balkans prepare for full membership – and as part of this effort, the EU is providing Bosnia and Herzegovina with practical aid and economic assistance worth 100 million Euros annually. With the recent abolishment of visas EU expressed its welcome to the citizens

of BiH but also welcomed Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state.

The opportunity to make the most of these positive circumstances must not be squandered.

After substantial achievements in the first eleven years after Dayton we are emerging now from a rather unproductive period of four years in which living standards declined and corruption increased.

No one wants that to continue.

The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have made it crystal clear, again and again, what they want – they want membership in the European Union.

They want a country that works, functionality strengthened, a country governed by the rule of law, a country that allows its citizens to live in dignity.

The people are clear about where they want to go.

Now it is their representatives, those newly elected in October, that must work to get them there.

Implementing the European agenda of economic, social and constitutional reforms will address directly the major challenges that BiH citizens face.

This means ending the economic and institutional crisis and bringing the constitution in line with European standards..

Some may ask: Is this really possible? Can BiH politicians really deliver progress?

For the answer to that question, just look back at what has been achieved in the last fifteen years.

At the end of 1995, this was a society on its knees – one hundred thousand dead and two million homeless, communities in ruin, a shattered economy, a traumatized people.

This is not the Bosnia and Herzegovina of 2010.

Today the country certainly faces huge challenges – but massive progress has been made and the problems that remain can be solved.

As we mark the fifteenth anniversary of Dayton, we see a country that has the material and human resources to recover its position as the fastest growing economy in Southeast Europe.

We see a country that has the means to complete its long journey to full European integration.

Potential will be transformed into positive reality if politicians focus again on solving problems, fairly and openly.

For most of the last 15 years Bosnia and Herzegovina has succeeded – and it has succeeded when its leaders have tackled practical issues constructively and in good faith.

We need more of that.

And we *can* have more of that.

The parties can do that if they form governments without delay and get down to the work they were elected to do.

Fifteen years after Dayton, the prospects and potentials for Bosnia and Herzegovina are good, in particular economically. Progress is possible and must be possible in political field.

The country is at a point where success is there for the taking, at a point where success is possible with just a bit more good political will and respect for the others. Above all respect towards citizens and destiny of good “ordinary people” of Bosnia and Herzegovina who represent the vast majority of the population.