

Supervisor Raffi Gregorian's Speech for the Central Ceremony marking the 10th Anniversary of Brcko District



High Representative Inzko, President Komsic, Speakers Belkic and Zivkovic, Minister Ahmetovic, President Kuzmanovic, Speaker Radojicic, Vice President Kebo, Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic corps, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, friends of Brcko: on behalf of the District Speaker, Assembly, Mayor and Government, let me officially welcome you to Brcko District on the 10th anniversary of its inauguration and international women's day.

After several hearings and interim decisions, the Arbitral Tribunal established under Annex 2 of Dayton issued its Final Award 11 years ago this month. Ten years ago this day, in this room, on this stage, members of the BiH Presidency joined US Secretary of State Albright, Commissioner Chris Patten, High Representative Petritsch, and Supervisor Farrand to formally inaugurate the Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Established as a single unit of democratic, multiethnic, local self-government under the direct sovereignty of the state, composed of the overlapping territories of both entities but where neither has power of governance, many people said it could never work. The calamity that war brought to Brcko made the challenges too great, they said.

To establish the District required merging three wartime municipalities in one of the most war-ravaged and landmine contaminated areas in the country. An area where thousands of

displaced persons found themselves at the end of the war, and where thousands more wanted to return but could not. The economy was in ruins. Suspicion and resentment of former adversaries was high. Crime was the only multiethnic institution.

And yet, defying all the odds, the Final Award has been almost completely implemented, and instead of lagging behind the rest of BiH, for the last 10 years Brcko has been out in front of the rest of the country in areas like judicial, police, and education reform, with the only real and effective privatization program and economic recovery to which the rest of the country only caught up only in the last two to three years.

Make no mistake about it: these sorts of changes are hard anywhere, and especially hard in a place like Brcko. But it was possible because the people of Brcko wanted it to work. A way was found to absorb the displaced persons who chose to stay as well as to accommodate those who wished to return. People who had faced each other across battle lines stepped forward to work together in government and help build a new community where it is possible to live and work together, to enjoy one's own way of life while cherishing the right of others being able to do the same thing.

With the help of international Supervision, the District's own institutions have developed to the point where they are able to function on their own. Since the passage of the Brcko amendment to the BiH constitution and the creation of the concentration government one year ago, I have already either delegated specific powers to the District institutions or used them only when needed *in extremis* or as a form of assistance to institutions.

What is left to be done is to insure that the District is fully integrated into and legally respected by the entities and the state. In this regard there has been huge progress

since the Arbitral Tribunal issued the June 2007 Addendum to the Final Award.

Only in the area of electricity has this not happened because for more than five years the District has been excluded from the legal regulatory framework that covers the entities and the state and connects it to the energy market of Southeast Europe. Brcko does not even have a license to legally purchase electricity from the regulated suppliers inside BiH today. When the energy market in BiH is liberalized some time after 2015, the situation will be untenable.

Fortunately, a solution for this problem was put in place last September. Once that solution is activated in all parts of the country, the conditions for ending Supervision in Brcko will have been met, and the District will have a lawful, enforceable, and reliable supply of electricity for as long as it exists.

Now, allow me, on the 10th anniversary of Brcko District to make some personal points by commending former Supervisors Farrand, Matthews, Clarke, and Johnson for their efforts to make Brcko what it is today, but also to pay tribute to their staffs and the tens of thousands of soldiers, police officers, and civilian experts who contributed to the development of the District in one way or another.

Second, after nearly 10 years of selfless service to Brcko District, my deputy, Gerhard Sontheim, is leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of this month. We both hoped that Supervision would have ended last November as planned, but with District institutions functioning effectively and apparently permanently, he can leave with a real sense of accomplishment, for which he deserves much of the credit.

*Please join me in a round of applause for Gerhard Sontheim.
Thank you.*

Third, while no officials from St. Louis could be with us today, they have proposed a meeting of all its 15 sister cities be held in Brcko in the near future. Something else to look forward to is exciting news about Webster University establishing a masters of business administration program here in Brcko perhaps as early as this year, while we already heard about the plans of University of Ljubljana to establish several faculties here. No doubt the mayor will have more to say about this vision of Brcko as a university town in coming days or weeks.

Lastly, I mentioned earlier the calamity for Brcko caused by war. In January, Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere, suffered a terrible calamity. In the space of just a few minutes, twice as many lives were lost in an earthquake there than all those killed in 3.5 years of war in Bosnia. Millions are homeless. At tonight's concert, the Red Cross will be collecting donations for the Haiti earthquake relief. Please, join me in giving as generously as you can, in the same way ordinary citizens from other countries gave to give you a chance to rebuild. Thank you.