

INTERVIEW: Valentin Inzko, the International Community's High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina "Referendum is an Election Trick"

Sarajevo, Beograd – I believe that Republika Srpska authorities are using the referendum as a tool in the election campaign. But in no way do I want to underestimate it. I am concerned by the fact that politicians in this country can "play" with everything, including the agreement that brought peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some people in Republika Srpska understand that their politicians are playing with the RS itself, because there is no Republika Srpska without Dayton, "Danas" was told by Valentin Inzko, the International Community's High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Do you think calling a "referendum in support to the Dayton Agreement" in the RS, as announced by Prime Minister Dodik, is acceptable?

– The best support for Dayton is compliance in full, and showing respect for High Representatives and their mandates. Dayton does not need any referendums for support. And there is no need to use Dayton to score cheap election points to the detriment of the general benefit of all citizens. Dayton should be complied with in full, it is not an a la carte menu where you choose what you want. Or – I will observe and insist on what I like, and won't implement and will obstruct what I don't like. Excuse me, but it doesn't work that way. This is

not serious politics. There's an election coming, and I wonder why the authorities are not proving themselves to the electorate in other things, such as economic progress, fighting crime and corruption, improvement of the health and education systems? The answer – to the misfortune of BiH citizens – is simple. They obviously don't have much to show in these fields.

Is the International Community going to initiate talks on constitutional change among party leaders in BiH soon?

– In principle, we support dialogue and agreement among local political leaders because this is the only way to find a solution acceptable to all and one that will make BiH more effective in terms of responding best to Euro-Atlantic integration challenges. There is a readiness to help local politicians, of course, if they want it. The International Community will certainly always be ready to help, but it won't impose constitutional solutions. Finding this solution is the sole responsibility of local political parties and leaders.

Can the European Union encourage the resolution of the crisis in BiH, accelerating the integration process?

– Local politicians in this country, of course, can resolve the problems of this country and accelerate the European integration process. This wouldn't be difficult if there were a sincere political will and if local politicians were ready to take responsibility for their decisions. This year, citizens will have an opportunity to evaluate politicians in an election. It is up to them to assess who has nationalist rhetoric and does nothing in the field of economy, social welfare, education, health. It is up to the citizens to say who is ready to reach agreements for the benefit of all and who is ready only to argue, inside BiH and with the

International Community and who pursues an isolation policy, and who has turned himself or herself into a problem instead of being a credible partner with whom everybody is prepared to cooperate.

Do you expect a stronger engagement of the USA in BiH?

– A high level USA delegation has always been involved in this process, and has genuinely put energy into and given support to these talks. The International Community is interested in progress in this country, but this process must come from within. It is hard if the convalescent doesn't want to heal and apply his or her own strength. However, the International Community won't give up on Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have invested a considerable amount of capital here – human, political and, if you will, financial.

Do Serbia and Croatia pursue adequate policies towards BiH?

– I will tell you what I think would be an adequate policy and leave the evaluation to you. To me, a good policy means supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also means supporting the Dayton Agreement and opposing a referendum which is a threat to the Dayton Agreement. A proper policy means supporting the constitutional system of BiH based on the Dayton Agreement and institutions which have been established over the years at the state level. A good policy means supporting BiH on its road to European integration. Rhetoric is important here, but action, too. I will repeat what I said before, and it is that at this time BiH needs to use the moment when it has constructive and fair neighbors on all sides: Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. There hasn't been such a favorable situation since 1992. In this sense, I am grateful to all the governments in the neighborhood for all the positive moves, and mostly for

support to the sovereignty and integrity of BiH.

Reforms subjected to the campaign

– The International Community is ready to help BiH. The Butmir meeting was organized for this purpose, where senior US and EU delegations tried to break the political stalemate. This was an attempt to unlock the implementation of reforms in order to accelerate the integration process. Unfortunately, this initiative was stopped because of some political leaders who see everything through the prism of the forthcoming election.