

End the Economic Crisis and Reopen the Door to Europe



The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Valentin Inzko, has again called on the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to end the economic crisis and reopen the door to Europe.

Speaking to university students today the HR/EUSR said that every serious effort to limit the spread of unemployment and poverty “has been blocked because of the political impasse that has now existed for more than three years.”

He said the International Community was pouring funds into Bosnia and Herzegovina – 1.2 billion Euros in development projects for the last two years alone – but that “it is the domestic authorities – not the International Community – that must address and resolve the present crisis. If they cannot do that, then it is up to the people of this country to change the authorities.”

The HR/EUSR said that without political consensus there is no hope that things will improve. “The absence of consensus has brought poverty and distress to most citizens,” he said. “I am shocked – and you should be shocked too – that this has apparently not been sufficient to make the party leaders act.”

He said that, “regardless of the suffering that surrounds them,” party leaders had “resolutely failed to take steps to fix the economy – steps that they agreed long ago they would take as part of the European integration process.”

The HR/EUSR said that “the most effective instrument that can be used to resolve three years of political deadlock is not the OHR: it is the indignation and anger of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” and he said that politicians would

not tackle the crisis “unless *you* make them.”

He added that the door to Europe has been “completely closed” – not by the European Union but “by the parties now in power, which in three years have failed to implement a single significant reform required by the European Partnership or the Stabilisation and Association Agreement.”

He stressed that between now and the October elections “public opinion must be focused on the steps that have to be taken to end the economic crisis and reopen the door to Europe. The most atrocious observation that I have heard made is that nothing can be done this year as there is an election in October. The fact is that much can be done *because* this is an election year.”

The HR/EUSR concluded by noting that while “the absence of consensus is directly responsible for the poverty and pain that permeate the country,” politicians show willingness and skill in reaching agreement on things they care about.

“Party leaders in this country routinely agree on how to allocate resources money and power among themselves,” he said. “If consensus can be built for the benefit of party leaders it can be built for the benefit of citizens. If consensus can be built to award members of parliament a pay rise, it can be built to improve the business environment, get bank loans to small businesses, bring employers and workers together and create jobs.”

The full text of the HR/EUSR’s speech can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.eu