

Remarks by High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko On the occasion of the Tuzlanski list Annual People Awards



A Society Where Talent Is No Longer Sidelined or Suppressed

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have become accustomed in recent months to speaking at political and economic conferences where the debate is often strained and difficult. None of us should minimise the gravity of the crisis facing Bosnia and Herzegovina – even as we meet here this evening, tens of thousands of families across the country are being forced to contend with the spread of poverty. Yet it is right that we recognise the qualities and character traits that are identified in Tuzlanski list's People Awards – because it is these very qualities that will help bring the country out of its present distress.

We are here this evening to honour achievement across a broad spectrum of activity. The recognition of Enis Beslagic and

Halid Beslic, for example, testifies to Bosnia and Herzegovina's enduring pre-eminence as a source of creative talent, for the region and beyond.

In my long association with this country, as an ambassador and then at the Austrian Foreign Ministry with responsibility for Southeast Europe and now as High Representative and EU Special Representative, one thing about which I have never had the slightest doubt is the wealth of talent that is to be found among the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Enis Beslagic and Halid Beslic are just two examples of BiH citizens who have excelled internationally.

And this excellence goes beyond the arts to encompass business, sport and a host of other fields.

Our task in the political sphere is to create a society that *rewards* and *encourages* talent.

We do not have such a society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All too often talent in this country is wasted or sidelined. It is even suppressed.

As High Representative and EU Special Representative I am working with the International Community and with those in the BiH leadership who want to cooperate with us, to change this unsatisfactory state of affairs – so that the great wellspring of talent that exists in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be unlocked and placed in the service of the country's citizens.

I am exceptionally pleased that Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor has been invited to join us at this evening's event and that Tuzlanski list has recognised the contribution that the Prime Minister has made not only to progress in her own country but to progress in developing good relations with Croatia's neighbours.

The experience of the last decade shows that when the

countries of the region coordinate their efforts, when they lend a hand to one another and move forward together, they make infinitely greater progress. Prime Minister Kosor has been an effective champion of regional cooperation and for this we thank her.

Creative talent, entrepreneurial vigour and more constructive and effective political leadership are all things that Bosnia and Herzegovina needs. I believe that these things *can* be brought to the fore, despite the painful setback of the last three years, during which politics has come to a standstill and the economy has gone into a tailspin.

Talent can only be suppressed for so long, and the natural talent that abounds in this country will surely prevail over the artificial constraints that have been placed in its way. The International Community will do everything it can to ensure that this happens sooner rather than later.

Thank you