

## **Citizens Have the Option of Voting for New Leaders and New Ideas**

Kick-starting the political process in Bosnia and Herzegovina is urgent because it will enable “exponential progress” in turning the economy around and helping the least fortunate in society, High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko said yesterday.

Speaking to members of the Rotary Club of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the HR/EUSR said “the lamentable state of the economy is now painfully clear,” and he noted that in 2009, more than 70,000 jobs were lost; GDP shrank by three percent; imports and exports fell; and average monthly salaries – for those who were not made redundant – stagnated.

The HR/EUSR said it was “absurd” to argue that nothing can be achieved in an election year. “A great deal can be done in 2010 because it is an election year.”

Citing examples from the economic reform agenda, the HR/EUSR said that in 2009 no progress has been made in enacting a 21st century legal code that would encourage investment and create jobs, in modernizing banking supervision so as to get more money to small businesses, and in setting up a Social and Economic Council to resolve problems in industry and boost growth.

“The ruling parties promised to do all these things as part of the European integration process. In 2010 voters should ask why – when jobs are evaporating and poverty stalks the land – they have not done what they said they would do.”

He said the International Community was being asked by some to force the political establishment to enact the legislation that will help end the misery of unemployment and poverty and by others to stand aside and leave the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to their fate.

“But these are not the only two alternatives. There is a via media – the one that is practised in the rest of the world, the one that is practised by Bosnia and Herzegovina’s neighbours (who are now making rapid progress towards EU membership while this country is not). In this via media it isn’t up to the International Community to solve the country’s problems; it is up to the people. If political leaders can’t do the job, the people have the option of electing new leaders.”

The HR/EUSR called on business people, students, trade unionists, consumer activists, employers and others to make their voice heard in the coming months.

“It is in the power of citizens to force an end to the present political deadlock,” he said. “It is in the power of citizens to make parliamentarians enact legislation as part of the European integration process – before the October elections, and it is in the power of citizens to ensure that the four years from 2010 to 2014 are significantly more productive than the period since 2006.”

The full text of the HR/EUSR’s speech can be accessed at [www.ohr.int](http://www.ohr.int) and [www.eusrbih.eu](http://www.eusrbih.eu)