

Ending the Obstruction



Progress in BiH is being blocked because of an unresolved political debate, High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko told the UN Security Council in New York today.

“The international community is working intensively with its BiH partners to resolve this debate,” he said. “When this is done, we can achieve rapid progress towards our final objective: a sovereign, prosperous and democratic BiH fully integrated in Euro-Atlantic structures.”

Presenting the OHR’s report to the Security-Council for the period 1 May to 31 October, Inzko said that “twin confusions” are the source of present difficulties: “There is confusion in the RS over the nature of the entity and the nature of the state” while in both entities there is “confusion about the proper focus of politics.”

“The RS leadership has failed to grasp that the state and entity authorities have separate and clearly defined mandates and that each must do its work without interference from the other,” he said. The resulting “persistent obstructiveness by some Serb political figures” has helped delay key reforms, including those that would have secured visa-free travel for BiH citizens, he added.

“The RS has created a problem at the state level and then criticised the state for having the problem,” the HR/EUSR said, pointing out that “a small group of confused individuals cannot be allowed to ignore the hopes and the common effort of millions of BiH citizens.”

He noted that while tens of thousands of jobs have been lost in BiH this year as a result of the world recession and the failure to enact key laws, "this existential crisis for hundreds of thousands of families has been ignored by the political establishment."

He also pointed to the absence of progress in bringing public administration and public broadcasting up to European standard, and he warned about "the growing politicization of the issue of refugee return."

"This litany of administrative failure, parliamentary gridlock, government ineptitude and general misery has a political, not a structural or an administrative root," Inzko said, describing the EU/US initiative to break the stalemate as a resolute attempt to grasp the bull by the horns and sort out the political problem at the heart of Bosnia and Herzegovina's present difficulties.

The immediate task facing BiH leaders, with international help, is to "complete the rule of law and economic reform agenda, resolve the issue of state and defence property, make provision for continued refugee return, and, where necessary, eliminate the political obstruction to these Dayton objectives," the HR/EUSR said.

He commended the Security Council for its decision to approve the extension of EUFOR's executive mandate in BiH, which he said was "a guarantee to citizens that the international community will not countenance even the possibility of a return to violence."

Before addressing the Security Council, the HR/EUSR briefed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on ways in which the International Community can help BiH overcome the current challenges. He also met with BiH's Ambassador to the UN, Ivan Barbalic, expressing support for the BiH Mission's intensive effort to prepare for BiH's Security Council membership next

year.