

DER SPIEGEL Interview with Valentin Inzko: “Arrows into the soul”



Valentin Inzko, 60, High Representative of the international community and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, speaks of the negotiations about the future of the country

SPIEGEL: The US government and the EU last week set a deadline for constitutional reforms and strengthening the unity of the state. Is the international community running out of patience?

Inzko: Yes. We will no longer tolerate blockades and a lack of will for reforms among Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. Our consultations will resume on 19 October.

SPIEGEL: Will Milorad Dodik, the Prime Minister of Republika Srpska, who insists on autonomy, be faced with sanctions at that time?

Inzko: We will leave that decision for later. But the international community will no longer be fooled. We are helped by the fact that BiH's neighbours, including Serbia, are being constructive, protecting the sovereignty of Bosnia.

SPIEGEL: Nevertheless, media in Sarajevo are speculating that the conflict between Bosniaks and Serbs might soon lead to new war.

Inzko: One must urgently refrain from such speculations, because many wars began with words. Words are sometimes like arrows and hurt the soul. Wounds from the last war have not yet healed after 14 years.

SPIEGEL: There will be elections in Bosnia in 2010. Bosniak and Serb parties will probably try to outdo each other with nationalist slogans, thus endangering the process of finding agreements.

Inzko: This is unfortunately true, and there is a growing dissatisfaction among the population. It would be good to make some progress before the elections, such as visa liberalisation that would allow freedom of movement within Europe. We reckon that a solution can be found by mid-2010. Bosnia must follow the European path.

SPIEGEL: Former US Ambassador William Montgomery no longer believes in that, and he is forecasting Bosnia's dissolution.

Inzko: He says that Bosnia should have three entities, with Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats having the right to

secede from the common state. I strongly object to such irresponsibility from a senior diplomat.

SPIEGEL: The EU is scheduled to take on more responsibility at the end of the year. What does this mean?

Inzko: An international presence will continue to be necessary in Bosnia, but the EU Special Representative will no longer have the right to dismiss domestic politicians when they misbehave, or have a decisive influence in the country. But, he will not, of course, be without any powers.

SPIEGEL: Will the EU Special Representative still be called Inzko?

Inzko: I would be pleased.