

Interview: Donald Hays, Principal Deputy High Representative: "BiH is very fortunate to have Ashdown"

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DH: The International Community has its favourites only in theory, not in practice. These are persons who believe in reforms, a free market, investments that contribute to the wellbeing of people in this country. This is our theoretic concept and we now observe candidates and monitor as to who fits best into the developed profile.

However, we do not vote. I will tell you something, other people would not say: should a group of people with whom we cannot work take power, the natural conclusion is that it will be difficult for the International Community to work with them and the sources for this country will dry up faster. One should take this into account during the forthcoming elections.

There will be no status quo. Persons in Western capitals monitor developments here and, if the situation has not improved after seven years, they will ask themselves why invest further here – warns the Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays in the interview for "Dnevni Avaz".

Second Mandate

PDHR points out the necessity that as many people as possible cast their votes so as to enable that the process of reforms and Europeanization, which has started to render first results, continues over the following four years.

DA: People, however, believe that the presence of the International Community here is what saves them from the negative reaction of the world, to which you referred.

DH: BiH is fortunate to have Paddy Ashdown. He is an excellent politician and representative of BiH's interests, he has been extremely successful in lobbying for BiH in the EU and the USA. This is the reason he goes abroad so frequently where he lobbies for assistance, personnel and political help for the objective of our efforts here. Should the forthcoming elections take us a step back, we will undermine his endeavours.

Two Scenarios

DA: Having said that, you opened the question of the worst possible scenario for developments in BiH. What will happen if persons with whom you will not be able to cooperate come to power.

DH: I do not think that it is possible for the worst to happen, yet I cannot imagine the best scenario will come true either. No party will be able to rule on its own and it will be necessary to form coalitions. They will be created also by parties that do not and cannot get along very well. During my previous work with politicians and parties I have not identified any group which may be singled out and qualified as follows: "They do not want to implement reforms". I therefore believe that neither of the scenarios that we discussed is possible in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

DA: What does the International Community expect from the governments that will be established after the elections?

DH: We will review all segments of the agenda as developed by the new authorities. We will need such administration that will be able to, for instance, have efficient negotiations with the European countries so as to create appropriate instruments and certificates for free trade. I am already working with the European Commission on a schedule to this end.

Legal Training

DH: Furthermore, we need institutions for legal training, an improved customs system, reform of tax administration, and as to the latter I think that the solution is that we copy and apply to the Federation what Milica Basic did in the RS.

In the field of education we must put into effect reforms so as to have funds allocated for this purpose discharged for the benefit of students rather than excessive bureaucracy. Should you find it necessary, the number of ministries of education will be reduced, and the funds currently spent by such ministries will be invested in equipment and improvement of the situation in schools.

We will continue our efforts in improvement of the infrastructure

Unfortunately, politicians have not referred to these issues at all during the pre-election campaign. Most of them speak about the war and the past, rather than about the future. This distracts people's attention from the elections as such, because people do not want to hear what the major number of politicians are trying to impose on them.

Registration of companies should be carried out within not more than 10 days.

DH: A centralised register of companies will be developed next year for the whole of BiH. There will be only one register, including 16 locations. We have been working on this project already a year. The objective of this project is to be able to register a company anywhere in the country within 10 days. This project and CIPS will significantly decrease the risk of having fictitious companies, as you will have one common identity card, and a single taxation index.

Cast your Votes

DH: People have told us on many occasions that they do not intend to vote, that the politicians deceived them and betrayed them. Every person in the world can state this, not only people here. However, this is democracy and those who receive the majority of votes will win. It can therefore well happen that the political forces that receive any response of voters win the elections.

Failing to cast their votes, citizens can enable those with whom they do not agree to come to power. I do not know why this would happen and why people who have the right to vote and a possibility to make changes would deprive themselves of this possibility? We do not want this to happen and we appeal to people to vote. Because this is the only way to change the situation. Do not allow someone else to decide on your behalf.