

Speech by the Senior Deputy High Representative, Matthias Sonn, at the National Democratic Institute's Third Annual School for the Development of Democratic Leadership

I want to thank my host, the National Democratic Institute, and the participants of this year's School for the Development of Democratic Leadership for inviting me to speak this evening.

NDI has asked me to touch upon three important themes this evening:

- The role of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in BiH.
- The importance of BiH's young leaders to democratic development.
- The short and long-term challenges for democratic development in BiH.

These are big themes but I will be brief, as I understand that dinner is waiting for us.

Let me begin with the **role of OHR in BiH**.

I will not waste time explaining the origins and details of the mandate of the Office of the High Representative. We all know this very well.

As the theme of this seminar is democratic development, I would like to touch on the OHR's role in creating a democratic BiH.

First, is OHR a democratic institution? No, clearly not. The citizens of BiH do not elect the High Representative, nor does OHR report to the authorities of this country, nor can national authorities hold OHR responsible for its actions. Nonetheless, OHR's authority is of course legitimate, beyond any question, under international law (General Framework Agreement for Peace).

So, why have democratic countries invented such an institution? Because following the war, it was generally agreed that this was the only way to ensure the development of a political system in BiH that would work for the benefit of all its citizens. In short, while OHR is not a democratic institution, it is most certainly an institution for democracy.

"Democratic consolidation" (Samuel Huntington) has not yet been accomplished in BiH. Which is why OHR is still needed. But the role of OHR continually grows smaller. BiH is on the road to Europe. Politicians and the general public in this country are increasingly striving for solutions to the benefit of all inhabitants.

OHR is therefore constantly engaged in a partnership process with local authorities. In the spirit of ownership, more and more areas are left as the sole responsibility of local authorities. However this is not an easy process. [Ex: Civil Service Law/ CIPS]

OHR will not be around forever. As the International Community becomes less and less engaged in the internal politics of BiH, it is time for you to take up the responsibility to take care of your own country.

Which brings us to the importance of young leaders to democratic development in BiH.

Although democracy is not necessarily about age, it is about active participation in politics to promote positive change. The youth of this country can bring a great deal of energy and new ideas to BiH's democratic process.

The 1990's in Bosnia were a time of tragedies and violence; of inter-ethnic conflict, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Past leaders took you down those roads.

Your task as Bosnia's future democratic leadership is to relegate that time to history, and create a better future. Your task is to work through democratic means to construct a democratic, free, stable, and prosperous Bosnia.

This is by no means an easy task. Many challenges lie ahead. US theologian and historian Reinhold Niebuhr

said “Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.” To this I would add: Justice may be achievable without democracy, but you certainly cannot create a democracy without justice.

This is why OHR’s most important project is the reform of the judiciary. The current state of the judicial sector is certainly one of the most serious threats to democracy in this country.

Incoming High Representative Lord Ashdown has gone so far as to say that corruption and organised crime in BiH are a bigger threat to the country than nationalism. We know that the judiciary as presently constituted is not able to effectively deal with these ills.

We also know how closely corruption and nationalist political forces are interlinked, which makes the challenge even more formidable for the IC as well as for the future judiciary.

Judicial reform will require some drastic actions. For this, we need support of both the current leadership and you as future leaders.

Another challenge is the economy. I don’t need to tell you that the economy of BiH is in terrible shape. Why is there a McDonalds in Niš (Serbia), but none in Sarajevo? You know that young people are leaving looking for better economic opportunity elsewhere. You know that what BiH needs is foreign investment.

But this won’t happen overnight. The conditions must be created to attract investment. Opportunity must be created. The most important exercise of democracy in BiH this year will be, of course, the elections on October 5.

To give you an example from my own country, in Germany, the biggest challenge to democracy these days is apathy—a lack of interest in politics. In past years, the majority of voters below 30 stayed away from the polls. By participating in this NDI programme, you are showing that you do not intend to join this trend.

You must use your influence and skills to make others follow your example. Voting is your responsibility and your obligation as citizens of BiH. If you care about the future of this country, go to vote in the elections this October. These will be the first elections carried out solely by the Bosnian authorities. They will give four-year mandates to governments.

The deadline for registration of new voters is June 15. Register to make sure your vote counts.

The most recent NDI poll clearly indicated that people in this country care about jobs, the economy, and corruption.

Think about what *you* want for BiH’s future, about which political parties and which leaders you see as working to help you get there. Which leaders stand for the future, which ones for the past.

The IC is concerned by the prospect of a dirty pre-election campaign.

Insults, underhandedness and violence are unacceptable in a democratic society.

We need more politicians in this country who act appropriately. Tell them this at the polls.

The following is, of course, true: “In a democracy everybody has the right to be represented, including the jerks.” (Chris Patten, European Commission). I would add that this does not mean you have to elect jerks to run your country. But you can only keep them from being elected by voting.

Let me leave you with these thoughts. I am looking forward to engaging you in discussion over dinner.