

Opening statement of the Brcko Supervisor, Henry L. Clarke, at press conference in Brcko on July 25, 2001

Yesterday the two coordinating groups that have prepared the harmonized curriculum for Brcko District met again, to review the implementation of the curriculum under the new law. These are the Primary Education Quality Board and the Education Collegium for secondary schools. They discussed a number of questions dealing with the plans for teaching the new curriculum this fall. After some discussion they approved the implementation plan as prepared a few weeks ago by the Brcko District Education Department.

I want to again congratulate these Brcko teachers and school administrators for their fine work. They have produced the first curriculum in all of the countries of the former Yugoslavia which was drawn up by classroom teachers, not bureaucrats.

But their job is not over. Teachers will be reporting back to work in August for extensive training in the new curriculum. It is reasonable to assume that once teaching begins in September, they will find the need to make adjustments in the curriculum or the implementation plan. All of us with an interest in this great innovation will need to remain flexible, and sensitive to the needs of the pupils in newly integrated classrooms.

That was the good news.

The bad news is on privatization. It came to my attention yesterday that the Republika Srpska has already privatized at least two companies in Brcko District, without any prior consultation with the District Government or my office.

This is unacceptable. The interests of Brcko District must be considered in any entity privatization within the District, and this was very clearly not done. This comes after other measures regarding privatization in the District taken by the RS without consultation and in violation of valid supervisory orders.

I want to be very clear. Any privatization undertaken in Brcko District, without the concurrence of the District Government and my office, may be declared null and void. This is not just a warning for the RS Government, it applies to voucher funds and to any other private parties. That means: if you have a contract or an obligation related to an unauthorized privatization in Brcko District, you may lose your money.

I hope this will not happen. I do not understand why there was no consultation between the two Governments concerned, to ensure that the legitimate interests of both are taken into account. I strongly support the basic concept of privatization – that the private sector can use these companies to increase jobs and incomes faster and better than government can. To be successful, however, privatization requires an open competition, with ample advertising and coordination – not a sneak attack on your neighbor.