

Speech by the High Representative at BiH Anti-Corruption and Transparency Conference

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, your Excellencies,

I would like to welcome you all to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Anti-Corruption and Transparency conference, and express my great pleasure to see so many representatives from all parts of public life: members of the Presidency, ministers and members of parliaments, members of judiciary, and representatives of political parties.

It is a very important and encouraging sign to also see so many NGOs, members of the civil society and the media.

Finally, I would like to welcome the members of the international community, and express my special gratitude to our distinguished speakers: His Excellency Mr Jan Eliasson, State Secretary, in the Foreign Ministry of Sweden, who will speak on behalf of the Stability Pact, Mr Sanjay Pradhan from the World Bank, and Mr Alexander Seger from the Council of Europe.

We've gathered here today to discuss additional actions needed to more effectively fight fraud and corruption, and how we can all join in this endeavour directed against corruption and for transparency in order to bring about stability for democracy, investment, and economic progress for all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As you are well aware, fraud and corruption have been identified as major obstacles to the full and successful implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Since 1998, my office has been working jointly with other members of the international community (World Bank, IMF, Council of Europe, CAFAO, USAID, OSCE, IPTF, UN JSAP, EC, SFOR, EBRD, and many others) on the implementation of the Comprehensive Anti - Corruption Strategy for BiH to bring about institutional and judicial changes. It goes without saying that my office closely collaborates with many local institutions, most notably with the judiciary and law enforcement agencies to lend assistance to their fight against corruption.

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina has stronger a judiciary than only a few years ago, better trained law enforcement agencies, and new criminal and civil legislation. The Entities' criminal codes, Law on Prosecutors and the Border Service Law, to be used against criminals who, irrespective of ethnicity, are trying to destroy this country in pursuit of their own personal benefit attest to the progress in this domain. Through its ongoing projects, the international community expresses its resolution to the confirmed support for the establishment of the Rule of Law in this country.

To be clear, the legislative and institutional reform is only a part of the fight against corruption. To expand on the existing anti-corruption efforts and make first successes firmly rooted and long lasting, all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina must actively engage against fraud and corruption. Every sector of BiH society: the state, the citizen and business associations, NGOs, the civil society and the media, have specific and important roles to play in achieving this goal.

It is very important to understand that we are not only fighting fraud and corruption, but are working for **transparency**. All the measures that are used to fight corruption are at the same time contributing to government efficiency. The very notion of transparency is to provide the public with more understanding of the inner working of its government. It is the openness to regular public scrutiny and control that leads to the responsible and accountable government.

The government is there to work for the citizen, and not the other way around. A responsible and accountable political representative should uphold all seven principles of public life.

The political will to change things for the better is very important. Political will is a demonstrated credible intent of political actors to attack perceived causes or effects of corruption at systemic levels. Political will can be recognized as being a degree of analysis that the regime has applied in order to understand causes and context of corruption, pass relevant legislation and empower or create relevant institutions to remove opportunities for corruption.

Having said that, I welcome the Bosnia and Herzegovina's readiness to accede to the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, GRECO monitoring mechanisms and other international instruments against corruption. I fully support its future participation in the regional anti-corruption efforts within the framework of the Stability Pact.

Corruption in this country is often **misunderstood as involving only the illegal exchange of money. To pay for a political or some other favor is bribery, but corruption is much more than that and it involves among others: abuse of office for private gain that can be a political or economic favor like a contract for public works; misuse of public funds and donations; disrespect of laws such as the Procurement Law; tax evasion; bank fraud, etc.**

It is, therefore, very important to fully understand this societal evil, as only the educated citizen can scrutinize institutions, thus making anti-corruption and transparency efforts sustainable. The anti-corruption public awareness campaign, a joint effort of my office and a local company, is starting today. Later during the day, you will be able to see the first in a series of TV animations on the cost of corruption to society.

In closing let me yet another time state the obvious. The future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its democratic and economic progress, is in your hands. Only the responsible and continued efforts of all sectors of the society can bring about the better future the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve. I, therefore, call on you to jointly engage in the battle against corruption and for more transparency in BiH.