

Dnevni avaz: Interview with PDHR Dennis W. Hearne



Interviewer: Sead Numanovic

The Dayton is very clear: BiH is composed of two Entities and neither of them is entitled to secession. It is very precisely stated in this international treaty. The Dayton does not allow for secession. Accordingly, the BiH Constitution states that BiH is a state that has two Entities, said Dennis Hearne, Principal Deputy High Representative. This experienced American diplomat took office a month ago.

In his first interview to any of the media, following his appointment, Hearne presents his views about the situation in BiH, region and the role and future of the OHR.

Dnevni avaz: What are your priorities in this office?

Dennis W. Hearne: I am here to support the High Representative in his mandate related to the adherence to and implementation of the Dayton Agreement. I am back to BiH after 20 years of absence and I would like to have as much interaction as possible with the governmental structures. In addition to the Brcko supervision, which is a part of my mandate, I am particularly interested in the implementation of the elections and the rule of law. Within the rule of law area, I am interested in fight against corruption.

Dnevni avaz: Speaking about the elections, what are the specific issues that interest you?

Dennis W. Hearne: There are a lot of things: from the Constitutional Court decision on the Bozo Ljubic's appeal to the judgement in the Sejdic-Finci case and its implementation. There are a lot of issues that have to be resolved in order to have the elections in October next year. We have time, and I believe all open issues can be resolved if there is will on the part of party leaders.

Dnevni avaz: Many people fear that the problems will happen after the elections. Do you share their view?

Dennis W. Hearne: I have heard of this view from some domestic actors but also from actors from the international community. It is important to have an open and constructive dialog both within BiH and with the international community. It will produce some of the solutions.

Dnevni avaz: PIC will be meeting next month. Were you surprised by the refusal of now already five political party leaders to come to the session?

Dennis W. Hearne: It is my first PIC session and I am looking forward to it. The meeting with the leaders of some of the parties was one of the ideas, and we asked them informally whether they would participate. I believe that it is a good opportunity to exchange views between local actors and the international community, in particular when it comes to elections. However, that was only one out of a number of activities that the PIC members will have. Work on the agenda is still ongoing. This body will be in session for two days, 7 and 8 December.

Dnevni avaz: Their refusal also says a lot about the position of the OHR in BiH. Something like this has never happened before.

Dennis W. Hearne: Some people have told me so. But I am new here and this is my first PIC. During the two days we will have many discussions on numerous topics. Some issues will be

discussed within this body alone, and some with local actors. But I have to say that it is somewhat disappointing if we cannot organize one session, which we think would be useful, in which we would discuss certain issues with people from BiH. But that does not mean that there is any symbolism in it.

Dnevni avaz: Are you concerned about a new growth of tensions between Sarajevo and Belgrade?

Dennis W. Hearne: I was in Sarajevo during the war years. When I came back, I was glad to see the progress that has been made. I was not glad to hear the statements that bring us back to the past. On that occasion the OHR issued a press release stating our concern. I would invite all leaders in the region to be more careful when dealing with the tragic past. We, and the citizens in the first place, need statements and activities that lead to a better future and not to tragedies.

Bombastic rhetoric is not helpful

Dennis W. Hearne: Political leaders should focus on practical and realistic ways to improve the social and economic situation in BiH. They have to be practical and the international community will assist them. It is much better than going back to the sensationalistic divisive rhetoric that is not helpful. Sometimes I wonder what is the point of such rhetoric and which kind of benefit it brings to the citizens.

It would be sad to know that the motive for such rhetoric is the preservation of status quo that suits some people. BiH needs to move towards the EU, towards creation of new and better opportunities, cooperation with other countries and towards the future. People of this country should work together.