

A Momentous Transition



Bosnia and Herzegovina is not going to be integrated in Europe under present circumstances – and specific and resolute steps must be taken to put an end to political obstruction, High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko said in a keynote speech to an international conference in Graz today.

For the European Union “this is a tremendous opportunity,” the HR/EUSR said. “We have it within our power to take steps that will facilitate the successful integration not only of Bosnia and Herzegovina but of Southeast Europe as a whole.”

Noting that the members of the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board are committed to securing Bosnia and Herzegovina’s full recovery and integration in Europe, the HR/EUSR said that the OHR – as long as it exists – can work in harmony with the reinforced EU presence that is now being developed.

He said that, as it moves centre-stage, the EU will assume “a responsibility that will affect the lives and the future prospects of four million people.” He added that, as the “toolkit” for the EU presence is developed, it should be remembered that this office will not simply be representational; it will play a key role in engineering the final transition of Bosnia and Herzegovina and, by doing this, it will facilitate the transition of the region as a whole.

“Until domestic mechanisms are established that will deal effectively with the problem of obstructionism it is hard to see how OHR’s role can reasonably be abandoned,” he said,

adding that, while “vital national interest” is a common political mantra, the *civic interest* of all Bosnians and Herzegovinians cannot be ignored. For over a decade the OHR has protected the interests of BiH citizens; the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina must have the capacity to protect its citizens in the same way.”