

# BiH must turn towards the future



Message of the High Representative Valentin Inzko:

“Bosnia and Herzegovina yesterday took an important step towards the European Union, which I wholeheartedly support. This is the beginning of a journey during which the elected leaders and institutions will need to show a willingness to transform the country in order to align BiH with European standards. It is a long journey and a process which must have real life issues as its focus.

At the same time the announced referendum on the RS day has shown that some of the politicians in this country still tend to ignore this new reality as they continue to look to the past. Issues like the referendum on the 9 January RS Day only prevent the country from moving forward, slowing down its integration into the Euro-Atlantic community.

Issues such as the referendum consistently hijack real discussions on the real issues facing the citizens of BiH. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are deprived of a discussion about the issues which matter most – economy, healthcare, education and in general a better standard of living.

From the standpoint of my mandate, the referendum is much more than pre-election politics designed to score points. It is a challenge to the BiH Constitutional Court, its decisions, the constitutional framework of the country, and the rule of law in BiH. It is not a public opinion poll as some would like to

portray it.

The BiH Constitutional Court has suspended the RSNA Decision on Referendum. This is a legal fact. Decisions of the Court must be respected. For that reason I call upon the RS authorities to respect the decision of the Court and not to hold the referendum, which has no legal basis.

The issue of public holidays should be addressed through dialogue and legislative changes and in line with the Constitutional Court's decision of last November, not through a referendum which goes directly against an order of the Constitutional Court.

Equally so, aggressive rhetoric calling for force or violence or invoking the dark imagery of war is a thing of the past and completely unacceptable. I therefore call on political actors on all sides to refrain from aggressive rhetoric. That kind of behavior has been forever relegated to the distant past and has no place in the European future of BiH."