

Brčko District: September Reforms Depend on Political Decisions in July



Delivery on reform commitments within the existing deadlines, including cleaning-up the voter register list, and a strong response to any misuse of public funds for campaigning or other corrupt activities will help strengthen the integrity of the election process and enable an issues-based election campaign, the Principal Deputy High Representative and Brčko District Supervisor Michael Scanlan stated during his visit on Monday to Brcko.

The Supervisor met with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Siniša Milić and Anto Domić, as well as Deputy Speaker of the District Assembly, Ivo Filipović, and with the President of the Brčko District Basic Court Jadranko Grčević and the Appellate Court President Damjan Kaurinovic. In the meetings, the Supervisor wore a mask at all times. He urges the residents of the District to closely observe instructions issued by relevant authorities regarding COVID, including on wearing masks and social distancing.

The Supervisor underscored to the City and Assembly officials the importance of completing the adoption in September of the three key pieces of legislation – on associations and foundations, on peaceful assembly, and on national minorities.

At this stage, only the draft law on peaceful assembly has

been adopted in the first reading by the Assembly, the other two draft laws remain pending with only two weeks left in July.

The authorities should also proceed before the end of the month with the creation of a working group tasked with drafting a law on conflict of interest. The Supervisor reminded his interlocutors that the OSCE, the EU and OHR are ready to provide technical assistance to the working group, as highlighted last week in a letter to the District authorities from the OSCE Ambassador.

The Supervisor also noted the 2nd of August deadline to establish the public register of the income of public sector employees.

Regarding elections, the Supervisor reiterated the legal obligation of the local level of government to review the voter register before each election. He added that it would be highly unfortunate if the Brcko authorities did not take this obligation seriously. The OSCE stands ready to assist the government if the Brcko District Assembly uses the upcoming rebalancing of the budget to provide the requisite funds.

In his meetings with Grčević and Kaurinović, the Supervisor underscored that to eradicate corruption in the District, the community, police, prosecutor, and courts must all fulfil their roles. Upon conviction, meaningful sentencing is critical, as only meaningful sentencing will be a meaningful deterrent to corruption.

“It is hard to understand how individuals who stole money from the public and betrayed the public’s trust can simply pay it back and return to work or be given a sentence of less than six months and then be allowed to return to a position of public trust. The courts must send an unambiguous message that the betrayal of public trust and theft of public funds by a civil servant or politician will be punished severely. Why

should international donors commit to projects in Brčko, if this is not the message?," added the Supervisor.