

Citizens Want to End the Economic Crisis and Get Back on the Road to Europe



It makes sense for the BiH authorities to implement the reforms laid out in the European Partnership and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement because these reforms will improve living conditions even *before* membership is achieved, High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko said today.

“It is common sense for the authorities to focus on achieving the consensus that can make these positive things happen,” he said, and called on citizens’ groups to speak “clearly and forcefully” and for citizens and authorities to “maintain a dialogue.”

The HR/EUSR was speaking in Sarajevo at a session of Citizens for Europe, an initiative that brings together expert civil society organisations and authorities from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina to discuss legislative proposals and other key priorities that will speed up the EU integration process. Today’s meeting focused on the agricultural and rural development sector.

Although half the BiH population work in rural areas, the agro-food sector accounts for just ten percent of GDP, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is a net food importer, the HR/EUSR said. This means that there is “massive potential” to improve productivity and create new and better paying jobs.

He said this could be achieved “by establishing modern and

efficient institutional support for agriculture and rural development, by supporting inward investment and effective marketing and export strategies, and by preparing the sector to absorb EU technical and financial assistance, which will grow exponentially when Bosnia and Herzegovina secures candidate membership status.”

He said it was now the “overriding priority” to form a Council of Ministers. “Once the authorities are in place it will be possible to address the economic crisis, which has continued for much too long and which has done untold damage to BiH households.”

The HR/EUSR said the Citizens for Europe initiative had allowed civil society to present the authorities with concrete and actionable proposals. “This civic voice is one the incoming authorities should heed,” he said. “It calls for practical reforms that can get Bosnia and Herzegovina out of the economic crisis and back on the road to Europe.”

The full text of the HR/EUSR’s speech can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.eu