

Dnevni list: Interview with the High Representative

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In an interview for Dnevni list, the High Representative Valentin Inzko talked about the current situation in the country, and warned that the ongoing crisis must be overcome as soon as possible, where compromise and dialogue are the only solutions.

Inzko believes that some leaders are deliberately provoking the crisis, and that what they are doing now is not what they promised voters at the last elections. As for local elections, he calls on citizens to vote and choose the people who will deal with their everyday problems in the best way. When it comes to Mostar, which will not hold elections together with other municipalities and cities in BiH, the High Representative said that in the coming days the OHR will get directly involved in attempts to resolve the Mostar issue.

Dnevni list: The political situation in BiH is very complicated. It is not clear who is in the government, and who is the opposition. Lagumdžija wants to remove ministers from SDA, Dodik wants to remove Lagumdžija. The country is at a standstill. There is no solution in sight. What is the way out of this situation?

Valentin Inzko: BiH is clearly lagging behind the rest of the region on the road to EU and NATO integration. This gap will only increase unless your political leaders finally put the internal party issues aside and focus on what the country as a whole needs. The fact that Croatia will formally join the EU and begin a new chapter in its history next year should be a real wake-up call for all; its accession will have important implications for BiH. In order to get out of the current

crisis there is no alternative to dialogue and compromise.

Dnevni list: A few days ago, you stated that the stability of BiH still poses a challenge and constantly requires actions of a united international community. Will the International Community and your Office become involved because of the current situation. Will you at least hold consultations and offer advice to help overcome the crisis?

Valentin Inzko: At this moment, there is no such intention. BiH is a country with Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations, and its leaders need to demonstrate that they are capable of resolving issues and problems on their own. It is clear that some leaders are deliberately creating a crisis to try to demonstrate that BiH is incapable of functioning. Still others, who do not share this agenda are unable to move beyond narrow political interests and work for the interests of the whole of BiH. The result of this combination is catastrophic for the ordinary people of the country; reforms are blocked and BiH's path to EU and NATO integration process is on hold. The international community wants to see BiH irreversibly on the road to EU and NATO integration.

Dnevni list: In your opinion, was it good to enter the reshuffling process for authorities at BiH and FBiH level? The new parliamentary majority in the Federation claims that they are unable to carry out reshuffling in the Federation because of alleged blockades set by the FBiH President and Vice President. Will you get involved in this process?

Valentin Inzko: Inter-party politics is not something that OHR should be involved in. I look to see full respect for the Constitution and the Law. I believe that the sooner the current upheaval is brought to an end the better; this reshuffling exercise has already resulted in too much lost time and has taken the focus off the reforms that the country desperately needs. This is not what any party promised their voters two years ago. They should fulfil what they promised.

Dnevni list: For some time now there has been talk that the International Community supports reconstruction of the FBiH, reducing the number of cantons. Is that a good solution? Is there perhaps a model proposed by the International Community? In your opinion, which number of cantons would offer the best solution, and can this “concentration” of cantons lead to a Croat federal unit?

Valentin Inzko: In principle making FBiH system simpler, cheaper and more efficient with equal protection for all is something that we always supported and I see no reason why anyone could object to these principles.

Dnevni list: Political parties have proposed their amendments to the BiH Constitution regarding the “Sejdic-Finci” case. Which proposal is the best?

Valentin Inzko: What is important is for your political leaders to find a compromise. I believe that the parties can find sufficient common ground to resolve most of the country’s outstanding issues and problems. The “Sejdic-Finci” decision represents an obligation for Bosnia and Herzegovina vis-à-vis Strasbourg and an opportunity vis-à-vis Brussels. The real question is whether the elected leaders are ready to follow through on their declared commitment to EU integration. The opportunity is there for them to seize.

Dnevni list: Will the EU impose any sanctions for failure to meet deadlines? What is the point of deadlines if there are no sanctions?

Valentin Inzko: It is not for me to speak about the deadlines contained in the EU Road Map. You should ask the leaders themselves what they are ready to do in order to restore their own credibility given that they have missed their own deadlines.

Dnevni list: Who do you think is the best political leader in BiH capable of moving the country forward?

Valentin Inzko: The one that keeps the promises he or she makes to improve the lives of the people who elected him and focuses on what unites BiH citizens rather than on what differentiates them. A politician that doesn't speculate on illusionary scenarios but works within the system to improve the lives of citizens. Confrontation is easy, cooperation and compromise is hard.

There are already a number of such leaders in certain local communities. I wish there would be more.

Dnevni list: Mostar is the only city in BiH which will not hold elections on October 7. Political parties do not want to reach an agreement to amend parts of the Mostar Statute and the Election Law, as ordered by the BiH Constitutional Court. Your Office is already involved in this problem. What do you plan to do?

Valentin Inzko: Yes, the only place in BiH where people will not be able to exercise their right to vote this November is in Mostar. This is a deplorable situation that directly affects the civic rights of the people of Mostar.

Following the failure of efforts in the Parliamentary Assembly and the City Council to find a solution to implement the BiH Constitutional Court's decisions, the international community has come to the conclusion that OHR can play a role in helping to resolve this regrettable situation. It was not our wish to get involved, but it is extremely important for this country that the decisions of the Court are respected and that all citizens can exercise their right to vote.

OHR has the full support of the Ambassadors of the PIC Steering Board to engage in a process with local parties based on a set of very broad understandings and principles. I plan to call a meeting of parties in the coming days to suggest a way forward. This will be a step by step process. The initial phase will be to gather basic information. This should help

the process and the parties in their subsequent discussions

Dnevni list: Bosniaks want division of the city, Croats want Mostar to be a single municipality and a single electoral unit. Is either of these solutions possible?

Valentin Inzko: Mostar will only move forward with compromise; no Party will get everything that it wants. Indeed, that is one of the core principles that must underpin the process of finding a solution. But with a positive approach, every party can contribute to an outcome that will first and foremost benefit the citizens of Mostar. I believe that the citizens want a united and prosperous Mostar, living up to the promise of its name.

Dnevni list: When will the OHR be closed?

Valentin Inzko: It is the policy of the international community that this will not happen before the 5+2 Agenda introduced by the PIC in 2008 is implemented. The implementation of the 5+2 agenda is a question for the country's leaders.

Dnevni list: How do you comment the fact that there are more than 500,000 unemployed people in BiH, but politicians are not dealing with this and other issues that burden ordinary life.

Valentin Inzko: Unemployment is one of the greatest scandals in BiH, with the saddest possible consequences for its people. This is the outcome of the longstanding practice where politicians do not feel pressure from citizens and subsequently do not understand that they are responsible to those who elected them instead of to party elites.

We have local elections next month. For the daily life of citizens, local elections are more important than the general ones, as they concern citizens' immediate environment. Also, in many cases most citizens know candidates well enough to have a good basis for their decision on whom to vote for.

So I hope that on their way to the polling station, each voter will take a good look around and ask themselves how satisfied they are with the way their neighbourhood has developed and the services they receive from their local authorities? Are the garbage containers full or are they emptied regularly? Was your tap running this morning when you woke up and wanted to wash your face? These are kind of things that your local leaders have to take care of. Think who has the best and most credible plan for developing your locality. And most importantly, go to your polling station and vote.