

Form governments, fix the economy

The General Elections have taken place. The electorate has made its choice and their will must now be respected. This is not the time for the political class in this country to be complacent and there are certainly no grounds for any politician to engage in self-congratulations. None of the parties participating in these elections have achieved results over the last four years or at the ballot box on October 12 that would justify that reaction.

“Now is the time to put government back in the service of citizens. There should be no doubt that both the International Community and the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have expectations – we expect incoming governments to deliver substantial and speedy results” said High Representative Valentin Inzko.

As a starting point, parliaments and governments must be formed quickly and fully in line with the law, and must ensure the required representation of the constituent peoples and others. The informal rotation principle for the Chair of the Council of Ministers every four years should also be respected, and I am pleased that it has become an accepted practice. This was introduced with the assistance of the OHR and it has proven to be a positive development.

The performance of governments over the last four years has simply not been good enough. Over half a million people are unemployed. Youth unemployment is one of the highest in the world and tens of thousands of families are still living with the catastrophic effects of the spring floods and tens of thousands more are battling every day with the scourge of poverty.

The same old approach that we have seen over the last eight years will not do anymore. Something needs to change and it needs to change now. The International Community will observe the government formation process closely and will be looking for signs that we are heading in the right direction.

The most important issue is the quality of the candidates who are put forward. In this context, basic questions need to be asked: Are these individuals competent to meet the challenges of the next four years? Are they strong enough and honest enough to resist corruption and to put the interests of citizens first? There are good and qualified people outside political parties and if they are prepared to participate they should be seriously considered as ministerial candidates.

“We also need to see more women appointed in the coming months, in line with the Gender Equality Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina which calls for equal gender representation – when one of the sexes is represented with at least 40%. There is a real need to have greater equilibrium between male and female cabinet members. At present, Bosnia and Herzegovina is failing to draw on a huge pool of talent that has a vital role to play in taking the country forward. So I take this opportunity to challenge the parties that enter government to appoint more women,” noted High Representative

“The focus when forming new authorities must not be on job creation for politicians and their friends and families. Instead the public sector must be made more functional and efficient. The Government of Tuzla Canton took steps before the elections to reduce the number of ministers from twelve to eight, on the sensible grounds that the efficiency of a cabinet does not improve by simply being large. The Tuzla Canton Assembly will now decide whether to proceed with this initiative. Once again, I challenge them to adopt this proposal, and I challenge other cantons to match their step and put the savings that are made into programmes that create new jobs in the private sector,” said High Representative.

Whoever enters government, fixing the economy and creating new jobs must be the priority, together with tackling corruption and unlocking progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration. This is what the incoming coalitions must commit to deliver from day one. They are expected to focus on this because this is what the people have clearly said they want.

“We have a chance for a fresh start. Let’s make sure it is taken. The spotlight is now on those political parties that choose to take on the responsibility of government, and we are all watching very closely,” concluded High Representative Inzko.