

Interview: Hanns H. Schumacher, Senior Deputy HR"Westendorp is Pushing a Heavy Rock"

The return to the capital must be an example for the rest of the country – If the Federal authorities do not resolve the problems raised by the CAFAO reports, OHR does not have to take any measures or sanctions, because if this happens, the International Community will lose its confidence – No one is going to return from Bonn with the instructions: “please try again”

The BiH public had an opportunity to meet Ambassador Schumacher two weeks ago, at the session of the BiH Parliament. Ambassador Schumacher was named for this post after the death of HR Deputy Gerd Wagner. In his previous diplomat career, Schumacher dealt a lot with journalists and media, so we were not surprised by his cautious answers to the questions we were asking.

After the CAFAO report was published, which caused a lot of stir in the public, but also in the Federal authorities, there is an impression that the ‘dust is slowly coming down’, Does it mean that OHR is satisfied with the response and activities of the Federal authorities so far on resolving the problematic published in the reports?

This is the only thing I have not read yet. The question is delicate, and I hope that the problems identified in the reports will be investigated and resolved in an appropriate manner.

DONATIONS WILL DECREASE

You said ‘an investigation and resolving the problems in an appropriate manner’. Was there any discussion in the OHR about the sanctions or measures you will take if the Federal authorities do not investigate and resolve the problem in an appropriate manner?

My answer to that question is very simple. Because, in that case, we, that is, the OHR does not have to take any sanctions or measures, because if that happens, this country will lose the confidence of the International Community. The donations of money will start to reduce, and finally stop. The interest of the foreign investors will also be lost, and the local authorities expect much from foreign investments.

Speaking of donations, have You noticed that after the publishing of the CAFAO reports, the donors showed less interest in investments in BiH reconstruction, that is, are there any similar announcements and is there some possible withdrawal of certain donations .

There is still readiness among donors to keep on assisting BiH. It is known that CAFAO has finished its reports recently. The Minister of Finances commenced an investigation, which is the first step, and now it only remains to wait and see the results, and to determine whether all the facts will be put on the table. In this phase, it is too early to talk about what could proceed, but I have to warn the authorities that this is the problem that the International Community will pay attention to.

THE FINAL STEP - PRESSURE

Recently, the HR Westendorp has been preparing for the meeting of the Peace Implementation Council in Bonn. Regarding the meeting, the extension of OHR mandate is often mentioned, as well as the extension of authorities, the protectorate, arbitrage ... What is this all about, actually?

We reached the final phase of using all the methods of democratic decision making, in order to achieve the solutions to some visual matters, I.E. the Law on CoM, the Law on Passports, the Law on Citizenship, etc. This means, we are close to an end; however, before the democratic institutions give their final word, I would not like to

talk about other available options. I can only appeal to common sense, because I have the feeling that the various sides in Bosnia have not shown much in the positions they have taken. This means that we have to make the final step, and make pressure to see if there will be some progress before we go to Bonn and say that we expended all our means. Of course, no one will return from Bonn with instructions like: 'Please, try again.'

The Federal Government accorded the Law on Housing with the proposal from the OHR, which stirred up the public. What is Your opinion on this matter?

Correct, the Federal Government accorded the Law with our proposal, but it still remains to be approved, that is, adopted by the Federal Parliament. I think its adoption is necessary in order to speed up return, especially to the capital, which has to be an example for the rest of the country.

Speaking about this law, there was great pressure on the Federal authorities to accord the law with Your, that is, the OHR proposal. There is a question what will be done in the RS, where the current law absolutely prevents the return of the pr-war inhabitants, not only to apartments but also to private houses?

When we speak about RS, I do not see any progress in this area. We can only wait to see if the approach to this problem will be changed after the establishment of the new RS Parliament. There is an intention to increase the number of returnees in the next year. This means that opening the RS is necessary, because the burden of return cannot fall on the back of the BiH Federation only. We are aware of this, and we will try to resolve it.

THE WORK OF SISYPHUS

Do you maybe know the Greek myth about Sisyphus and the rock he was pushing? Sometimes it seems to me that Mr. Westendorp resemble Sisyphus pushing the stone, almost reaching the top of the hill. Now, we are really facing the situation when the pushed rock might slide back down the slope, which would mean starting everything from the beginning; and on the other hand, we are facing the meeting in Bonn which might mean pushing this rock finally over the top of the hill. We will see what will happen, says Schumacher.

THE CROATIAN PROPOSAL - UNACCEPTABLE

The matter of establishing the special relations between entities and the neighbouring countries was risen again by the Croatian proposal. What is the standpoint of the OHR on this matter?

OUR position is clear. The [Peace Agreement](#) covers the establishment of such relations. In accordance to this, we formed a working group which advises RS and the BiH Federation, and which already made draft agreements on establishing the special relations. We sent these documents to the entities and the states of Croatia and Yugoslavia, but we still do not have the answers, that is, reactions. Of course, we will insist on respect for what is covered by these drafts on special relations. For example, what Croatia proposed is unacceptable, simply because it violates the articles of the Peace Agreement.

Do You think that with this proposal Croatia tried to draw attention from the burning problem between Croatia and BiH about the usage of the Ploce harbour?

If Croatia wished to stop the negotiations about the Ploce harbour, that is, if this was the plan, they did not have to do what they did. However, I think that the Croatian step of proposing special relations to the BiH Federation was too early.

The proposals we experienced so far show that our neighbours, Croatia and Serbia did not lose their appetites for BiH territory. Do You agree with this?

I think that the both leaders in Belgrade and in Zagreb have too many problems of their own, to make this their prime preoccupation. We also must not forget the fact that the Peace Agreement involves not only the BiH, but

also the neighbouring countries, and the International Community is here to supervise their contribution to its full implementation.

TO BRING THE WAR CRIMINALS TO COURT

In the past couple of days, the international officials mentioned again various criminals and their negative role in the peace process, but in the previous period, they were not mentioned so much. Why was it so?

Personally, I think that these persons must face justice, if we want to establish democracy and the rule of Law in the region. Everybody is aware of this. And as for the mentioning of war criminals, I have an impression that less we talk about them, the sooner the solution to the problem will appear.

War criminals, the return of refugees, misinterpretation of the DPA by some, unfortunately, leading parties of RSÖ All of these are the matters that DPA implementation depends on, and along with this, the future of the united BiH. Therefore a question: For how long will the International Community have the willingness and the patience to stay in BiH and do this job?

Your question is reasonable, but to be honest, it cannot be answered simply. I am personally convinced that the International Community will have enough patience to implement the Peace Agreement, because if I did not think so, I would not accept this job. I would not have the vision, I would not have the long-term aims that we all are trying to achieve. I think that after the Bonn, we will have clear instructions and a clear path that lies before us, and the confirmation of the willingness of the International Community to implement Dayton. The alternative to what I said would be the division of BiH, and this is not the wish of the International Community, nor it seems, of the people in BiH.