

Interview with HR/EUSR Valentin Inzko



Dnevni avaz: Government in BiH has not been formed yet. Is this the time to sound an alarm?

Valentin Inzko: We are long past the point where the Council of Ministers should have been appointed. So many people across this country are struggling to get by. They have been waiting since October not just for new governments, but for new governments who can take the country forward, who can make the reforms needed to improve their lives. How much longer can we ignore the plight of half a million unemployed, or that of hundreds of thousands of pensioners struggling to survive from one month to the next? We all know people who are in this situation.

What we need without any further delay is a Council of Ministers ready to deliver reforms to get people back to work, to get the economy going and of course to get the country moving again on the road to Europe. Enough of party interests, we need a break-through, we need party leaders to put the interests of citizens first. We need to see a new Council of Ministers in place, not now, but yesterday.

Dnevni avaz: Although talks between parliamentary party leaders seem to have recently intensified, it is obvious that their positions are far from agreed...

Valentin Inzko: It is logical that parties and their leaders have different views. This is the case in any parliamentary democracy. But true leaders will work to find common ground

and use that as basis for further steps ahead. The only way to tackle the economic crisis and to have the country back on track towards EU is to form functional and efficient Government. That is the first, very important step.

Dnevni avaz: The next talks between leaders are announced only at the end of August. How can the government formation process be speeded up? How can we bring closer the positions between the two HDZs, Platform parties and RS parties?

Valentin Inzko: As I said, it is up to the political parties who won the trust of the electorate in October to focus on the issues that need to be solved. In recent days in the United States we saw how parties with very different agendas came together when the country was faced with a crisis. They came together in large part because the public had become so angry with political bickering and deadlock at a time when ordinary people are struggling. The same applies to the leaders of this country. They should turn their, so far only declarative support to the EU integration process into a reality by intensifying their efforts to compromise and form a Government.

When you read their statements, they all agree that the only future for BiH is the one in European Union. Well, if that is their common ground, then – please gentlemen, roll up your sleeves and get to work.

Dnevni avaz: Is the OHR going to get involved?

Valentin Inzko: It is the responsibility of the political leaders of the majority parties elected to the BiH House of Representatives, not the OHR, to reach an agreement on a new Council of Ministers. This is my opinion, and the opinion of the rest of the international community.

Dnevni avaz: Are early elections a possibility?

Valentin Inzko: To what end? Now is not the time for early

elections, now is the time for political leaders to meet their basic obligation to the citizens of this country after an election – the obligation to appoint a government. Bosnia and Herzegovina is here to stay, but political leaders will come and go. This is how it will be. The longer these leaders delay in meeting their obligations, the further the country will fall behind other countries in the region when it comes to the EU and the further the country will be enveloped by major social and economic problems. The region is moving forward towards the EU – Croatia will become its member in 2013, Serbia will soon join Macedonia and Montenegro as a candidate. Where is the urgency with this country's leaders to take BiH on the same road?

Dnevni avaz: Both the SNSD and SDP count with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. How can one resolve this impasse?

Valentin Inzko: As I said it is not OHR's responsibility to find a compromise. There is sufficient scope for the parties to reach an agreement, if they are ready and willing to accept the responsibility. Every day they continue to fail to reach an agreement, the country and its citizens suffer the consequences..

Dnevni avaz: Considering your recent decision related to the SBC Government, is a reconstruction of the Federation Government possible?

Valentin Inzko: I have said what I have had to say on the Federation Government. It has now been established and is getting down to business. The Federation faces numerous challenges and the onus is on this government to prove that it can tackle them. It is early days but there are signs that they are ready to take difficult decisions and to make changes where they are required. We are all watching closely and wish them well. What I would add is that regardless of who is in government and who is in opposition, the challenges facing this country are such that parties need to put the interests

of the country first.

Dnevni avaz: How does the failure to form government impact the obvious worsening of the economic situation in BiH?

Valentin Inzko: Of course the fact that BiH does not have a Government more than nine months after the elections impacts negatively on the economic situation in the country. For instance, the impasse has delayed the enactment of measures that are preconditions for the disbursement of International Monetary Fund and European Union assistance, has had a negative rating on BiH's credit rating outlook, and foreign direct investment has also "contracted sharply". We have consistently warned political leaders over the last five years that if they refuse to deliver reforms and if they engage in nationalistic, anti-Dayton statements then foreign investors will go elsewhere and the number of new jobs being created will be substantially reduced. This is exactly what is happening. Foreign Direct Investment has plummeted and new jobs are negligible. Enough of the rethoric, politicians need to get back to work so this country can get back to work.

Dnevni avaz: Entity governments count with EC funds for BiH to the amount of over 100 million KM. Can BiH use this money without a formed government?

Valentin Inzko: The answer to this question is very simple: international organisations expect this country to deliver concrete reforms in return for assistance. If the country does not meet the requirements that have been set, then funding will not be released. This is a principle that applies across the globe. This would be a great shame, however, for the people of this country if this opportunity were to be missed.

Dnevni avaz: Both entities' budgets are faced with deficits in millions. Are the BiH entities under a bankruptcy threat?

Valentin Inzko: This country is facing serious challenges that

necessitate major reforms that become more difficult the longer they are put off. This country must come together, it must reintegrate and reform to be functional and competitive. If it does not, the economic consequences could be very serious for both entities.

Dnevni avaz: You reacted sharply to recent statements by Milorad Dodik? Are concrete measures and sanctions possible?

Valentin Inzko: It is my role, indeed it is my obligation under the Dayton Peace Accords, to set the record straight and to uphold the Peace Agreement. I will continue to work with the entire international community in BiH in doing so. The issue was discussed with the Steering Board of the PIC and the Board of Principals of the main international agencies operating in BiH, and I can assure you that there is a great deal of concern about these statements from the RS. Indeed, *the PIC Steering Board views these statements as serious, worrisome and demanding of an explanation.*

The bottom line is this: The Dayton Peace Agreement is absolutely clear that BiH is a sovereign state and the Peace Agreement absolutely guarantees the territorial integrity of BiH. You will not find anywhere in the Dayton agreement references to a "state union" or the sovereignty of the entities, because they are not there.

At the end of the day, no matter how many times someone repeats false information, it still remains precisely that, false information. It is my mandate to uphold the Peace Agreement, and this is exactly what I will continue to do for as long as it is necessary.