Inzko informs US Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg of challenges to BiH Peace Agreement

Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing the most serious challenge to the Dayton Peace Agreement since it was signed in 1995 said High Representative and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Valentin Inzko when he met with US Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg in Washington today.

During recent years the sovereignty, territorial integrity and functionality of BiH have been subject to ever increasing challenges; now seven months after the elections there is still no prospect of a new State level Government being formed, and the Euro-Atlantic integration process has ground to a halt. Last month the RS National Assembly passed a decision to hold a referendum directed against the state judicial institutions and the UN-mandated authorities of the High Representative. This move threatens the very basis on which peace in BiH has been built over the last fifteen years.

“The International Community response to this must be decisive and unified,” said HR/EUSR Inzko.

The constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is also Annex 4 of the Peace Agreement, does not permit an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina to reject the authority of a state institution. “RS politicians know this, and they should know that undermining the Peace Agreement is a dangerous political adventure – one which can have unforeseen consequences,” said

HR/EUSR Inzko. “Our collective response to this will also be an early test of the EU’s External Action Service,” he said.

The current trend should not been seen as a short-term crisis but as the culmination of unfortunate developments over the past years, which show the necessity of a continued International Community presence in BiH.

“BiH has not yet achieved the political stability required to stand on its own”, HR Inzko emphasized. “The need for an international presence with an executive mandate such as is held by the Office of the High Representative and EUFOR is evident.” The IC needs to keep sufficient tools in hand to prevent attempts aimed at reversing previous achievements in state-building and creating instability, which could have negative consequences for the entire region.

HR Inzko thanked Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg for the strong and constructive engagement of the United States in BiH, including through its crucial role in the Peace Implementation Council.