

Inzko Thanks Japan for Its Generous Support to BiH



Meeting Japan's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Ken-ichiro Sasae and the Foreign Ministry's Director-General for European Affairs Yasuaki Tanizaki in Tokyo today, the High Representative and EU Special Representative Valentin Inzko thanked Japan for its strong political and generous financial support to the OHR and Bosnia and Herzegovina over the past years.

Japan contributes 10% of the annual budget of the OHR, as one of its greatest contributors. It provides key political support and valuable input within the Peace Implementation Steering Board. The country currently holds a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council and in this capacity disposes of additional political means and leverage on issues of global interest.

Japan has also been among the largest bilateral donors in the post-war reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through community assistance programs and grants, as well as technical assistance in areas such as road construction, public transport, demining, schools and feasibility studies.

During his talks with senior Japanese officials, the High Representative and EU Special Representative reiterated the need to fulfil the two conditions and five objectives set by the Peace Implementation for OHR transition to the European Union Special Representative Office to take place.

"With respect to the issue of state property, I expect experts working for OHR to begin verifying and collecting data at

registry offices in September. The outcome of this technical exercise will then form the basis for the political agreement needed to apportion the identified state property", Inzko explained.

Inzko also insisted on the need for BiH to catch up with other countries in the region in meeting the requirements for visa liberalisation. "Unfortunately, Bosnia and Herzegovina has now fallen behind its neighbours in the process of EU integration", Inzko said.

Speaking of constitutional reform, the HR/EUSR said that the international community expects political leaders to create more functional structures and increase the capacity of BiH to meet the challenges of EU integration. "This entails first and foremost the ability to enforce rules throughout the country and the ability to speak with one voice in international affairs. A constitutional reform should also address human rights issues so as to enable all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to equally run for all offices, which was not possible until now for certain segments of the population, as they do not belong to one of the three constituent people."

Emphasizing his office's excellent relations with Tokyo, the HR/EUSR commended the cooperation with the Japanese Embassy and Ambassador in Sarajevo as well as the Japanese Ambassador in the UN Security Council.

On 28 August, the High Representative and EU Special Representative will speak at the Japanese Institute of International Affairs about the current difficulties, challenges and opportunities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.