

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE OF VALENTIN INZKO, HIGH REPRESENTATIVE AND EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE IN BiH



In his New Year's message the High Representative and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Valentin Inzko, has outlined his views on political and economic priorities for 2011

The first priority has to be formation of Government. Voters went to the polls in October because they want to see a Government that works. They want jobs and the country's economic and social problems tackled. People also voted for greater rule of law. I will support all efforts to put in place a coalition that will deliver this in practice.

Secondly, there is a clear need to accelerate and deepen the EU reform agenda in 2011. All political parties and leaders backed the EU accession process ahead of the elections. All have said that they intend to fight corruption, strengthen the rule of law and get the economy back on its feet. This provides ample ground for agreement; and there is now a window of opportunity which should not be missed. BiH politicians need to seize this opportunity; otherwise they alone will be responsible for the consequences.

Thirdly, we need to see Bosnia and Herzegovina make the most

of the things that bind people together, things that are the same or similar, rather than things that are different. Understanding the few existing differences and the ability to live together is what made and what makes BiH society so unique. There are many more things that bring people together than separate them. It is Bosnia and Herzegovina's diversity that makes the country so rich in resources, so distinctive and so unique. This diversity is not a burden: it is a treasure. Political leaders should understand this and build on it, and at the same time they should build on what citizens have in common. And there is a great deal in common. I hope to see a change in attitudes in 2011 in this regard.

Fourthly, I expect an end to negative, zero-sum politics. Challenges to the Peace Agreement must end. Don't let anyone tell you that this cannot be done. Success in visa liberalisation has proved that it *can* be done, and if it can be done, then it *must* be done – this country's citizens expect nothing less.

In a society as diverse as Bosnia and Herzegovina we need to be able to respect people who are different from us, and that means recognising their needs and their achievements. Exclusivity was never a part of the fabric of Bosnia and Herzegovina; it is not in the nature of BiH society. But as we are different, we all have different and unique talents to offer society. Let us use these talents more in the future than in the past.

With the exception of visa liberalisation in the course of 2010 there has been little progress. Across the region countries are picking up speed as they move toward the European Union. Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be a black hole. Political leaders need to realize how important the next four years will be and what kind of impact their actions will have for decades to come. No one in Bosnia and Herzegovina wants a repeat of the last four years, which is why this country's leaders must seize the chance for a fresh start, show

responsibility and get the country back on track to the EU.

Finally, the EU engagement in 2011 in Bosnia Herzegovina will grow. The international community stands ready to assist in every way possible, but the essential decisions to move forward must come from within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Politicians and all those who have a function in this country, any function, have to show to both citizens and the European Union that they are capable of making this country more functional and taking it forward.

I wish a Happy New Year to all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.