Nezavisne novine: Interview with HR Valentin Inzko

By Almedin Šišić

Nezavisne novine: A few days ago you registered as an observer at the upcoming elections. What prompted you to make this, at the very least, unusual decision for a diplomat?

Valentin Inzko: I want to underscore the importance of elections as a democratic tool and wanted to make my contribution. If you remember I am also touring municipalities in BiH where we had low turnout during the last elections to encourage people to get out and vote. It is important that citizens actively participate in choosing their representatives. So let me use this opportunity to once again call on all the voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina to cast their ballot and in so doing to take control of their own fate. Don't stay at home. Don't let others choose your government for you.

I will visit a couple of polling stations on Election Day but more details will be available closer to the elections.

Nezavisne novine: There are frequent claims and accusations by ruling and opposition parties about the possibility of election fraud. How do you view this issue, is that even possible having in mind that there will be around 8,000 domestic and international observers?

Valentin Inzko: The possibility of fraud will be mitigated by the presence of observers but such possibility always exists. We trust that the CEC will continue to do its job professionally and call upon all those involved in the election process to do the same. We will be watching closely on Election Day.

Nezavisne novine: Do you think these are the decisive elections for the future of BiH?

Valentin Inzko: I believe that every election is important, but I sense that these Elections are especially crucial because we need these Elections to be a turning point after which we will see a new kind of politics where the interests of the citizens and the country as a whole are put first. I absolutely believe that we can have a new approach after the elections. I hope that citizens feel the same way. They have a role to play and a responsibility in controlling politicians as well as we move forward after the elections. I am sure no one wants someone else to pick what they wear so why would you let others make your political choices for you, thus determining the future for you or your children. It is important that citizens understand the importance of elections and that is why I am going around and encouraging people to get out and vote.

Nezavisne novine: Speaking of BiH's future, the new European Commission has temporarily suspended the role of enlargement commissioner. What kind of message does this send to BiH?

Valentin Inzko: I think that the EU has an excellent new Commissioner in my compatriot Mr. Hahn. If Bosnia and Herzegovina gets serious about delivering the requirements of Euro-Atlantic integration – you will have a reliable partner in the International Community that will assist you every step of the way. This is not the question. The question is whether you elect politicians and leaders who can work together and cooperate to deliver healthy compromises or will you elect politicians who cannot work together to deliver the necessary results. The choice is yours. I hope you make the right one.

Nezavisne novine: There have been many calls and implications that Bonn powers should again be used in certain cases?

Valentin Inzko: The executive authorities of the High

Representative remain in place. They are available should they be needed, but this is not the objective. The objective is that we have authorities that fully respect the Peace Agreement, address the needs of citizens and work to take the country forward towards Euro-Atlantic integration. What I would like to say to people is that I very much encourage voters to vote for positive changes on 12 October and not out of a sense of fear. Seek out those parties and candidates who are offering you real and concrete answers as to how they are going to solve the very real challenges facing you, be it unemployment, corruption, poor health services, or whatever else is important to you.

With you vote on 12 October the country can get back on track.

Nezavisne novine: When could the conditions for closing of the OHR finally be met? What remains to be done by BiH authorities from the 5+2 package?

Valentin Inzko: Ask the politicians elected four years ago and after 12 October ask the politicians that you elect. They must deliver the requirements for closure, not us. As in so many other areas the results have been poor.