



Radiosarajevo.ba: Interview with HR Valentin Inzko

By Amil Dučić

Radiosarajevo.ba: A question regarding Mr Dodik's most recent statement: can the RS walk out of the NATO MAP?

Valentin Inzko: The BiH Constitution, the Annex 4 to the Dayton Peace Agreement, states clearly that foreign policy is an exclusive responsibility of the institutions at the state level of BiH. Accordingly, the NATO issue, which is part of the BiH foreign policy, is an exclusive responsibility of the state.

Regarding the Membership Action Plan, the BiH Presidency has already decided on this issue in 2009. The then Presidency members, including the Serb Presidency member Nebojsa Radmanovic from President Dodik's own party, made this decision. In fact, it was Mr. Radmanovic who signed BiH's formal BiH application letter addressed to the NATO Secretary General in 2009, asking for BiH to be granted the NATO Membership Action Plan.

In this context, I would like to state clearly that decisions of the BiH Presidency remain in force unless they are repealed or altered otherwise, so the situation is quite clear.

Radiosarajevo.ba: Do you expect even stronger nationalistic rhetoric in the pre-election period? Can it actually be any stronger?

Valentin Inzko: We have indeed witnessed an increase in heated messages, be it secession of entities, hypothetical war scenarios or negation of ICTY verdicts. Even though the elections are almost a year away, it is not difficult to do the math. I am afraid it would be naive to expect politicians to let go of a tool that they have so skillfully used in the past, and to expose themselves to be judged and voted on based on their merits and achievements alone.

Having said this, I have my doubts whether we are only seeing the pre-election rhetoric. I think the rhetoric has developed over the years – in a negative way. At first, it was clear pre-election rhetoric, which, however, developed into a permanent divisive rhetoric and, even more worrying, into divisive policy. This policy is not in the interest of the citizens of BiH regardless of their ethnicity, as it blocks the entire country and stalls the prosperity of BiH.

Citizens of BiH deserve leaders who would work for genuine progress instead of making irresponsible statements that serve no other purpose but to keep the country in a state of constant tension. Toying with people's emotions

cannot bear any healthy fruit, and such games need to stop. In that sense, I hope that a new generation of politicians will emerge this time, people who want to stay and live in this country, and take it forward.

Radiosarajevo.ba: It is hard to be optimistic when it comes to the implementation of the Constitutional Court's judgment for Mostar or in the "Ljubic" case. You are constantly asked about the Bonn Powers. It seems they will have to be resorted to in these cases in 2018?

Valentin Inzko: I firmly believe that good domestic solutions are the longest lasting ones and the best way forward. I also believe that we can come to that. We have seen in the past that BiH leaders are capable of reaching compromises. They can do so again. The Bonn powers still exist, they are still at my disposal but I would prefer not to be forced to use them.

I use this opportunity to again urge the political leaders to seek compromise on the electoral reform, which would enable a smooth conduct of elections and uninterrupted implementation of election results. From the standpoint of my mandate, this is an immediate priority. Since we have mentioned the "Ljubić" case, which is of great importance, we also shouldn't forget about other court rulings, such as "Sejdić-Finci" and "Zornić" cases, the ruling on Mostar, and the one referring to the status of Serbs as constituent peoples in certain cantons, which has been pending for 15 years.

Radiosarajevo.ba: Russia often dissents from the PIC conclusions. Were you surprised with the Russian "yes" to the extension of the EUFOR mandate in BiH?

Valentin Inzko: I was not surprised. While there are often different views among PIC members on particular issues, we all share the same goal for this country. The entire international community, including Russia, supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of BiH. EUFOR will be present in Bosnia and Herzegovina until the country can demonstrate that it's on an irreversible track towards stability and prosperity.

Radiosarajevo.ba: Could I ask for your realistic prognosis of the political situation in BiH in 2018. It is an election year, and the leaders are very generous with words and negative rhetoric.

Valentin Inzko: Indeed. I think it is clear that politicians and political parties are already in the pre-election mode. The pre-election campaign is premature. In the coming weeks and months, we can expect a lot of politicking and negative rhetoric, which is unfortunate, as BiH clearly needs bold social and economic reforms and strengthening of the rule of law.

The country needs to tackle daily issues of citizens, from the quality of service in the country's public administration to a functioning and effective healthcare system. I sincerely hope that BiH can manage to find a compromise on the needed electoral reform, that the country's citizens will take the opportunity to cast their ballots at next elections, and that the next mandate will not be another lost opportunity for BiH to finally move forward more decisively.

Allow me to use this opportunity to wish you and your audience all the best in the New Year. I wish them plenty of personal successes and, of course, health.