

Remarks by Brcko District Supervisor Bruce G. Berton at the Brcko District Day Ceremony on 8 March



Mr. Mayor, Mr. Deputy Mayor, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Ambassador Wigemark, ladies and gentlemen.

It is always a pleasure to be in Brcko, in particular on March 8: I want to congratulate all the citizens of Brcko on the Day of the District. As many of you know, March 8 is also International Women's Day, so I want to commend the tremendous contributions of the women of Brcko and of Bosnia and Herzegovina to this community and this country.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence of two additional people in the audience. Of course I would be remiss if I did not introduce my boss, High Representative Valentin Inzko, whose years of service prove his dedication to this country and its people. Second, I have the honor to introduce you to Ambassador Clint Williamson, the new Presiding Arbitrator of the Brcko Arbitration Tribunal. Ambassador Williamson has a distinguished record both as a diplomat and as a Special Adviser to the US President, and extensive experience in the Western Balkans. He will be a strong asset to our joint efforts and to our mutual desire to see a stable, sustainable and prosperous Brcko District.

For the citizens and elected representatives of Brcko, District Day is an occasion to celebrate the achievements of this unique community, as well as an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned and on the work that still remains to be done.

Through the joint efforts of the District authorities and citizens, and with the strong and unequivocal support of the international community, Brcko District has travelled a long road from being a war-scarred community to becoming an example of successful reform in many areas, an example from which others in Bosnia and Herzegovina can draw valuable lessons.

Looking at your most recent achievements, I would in particular commend the professional organization of the local elections and the quick government formation that followed. I want to congratulate the new office holders and I call upon them to work consistently, constructively, efficiently and effectively in the best interests of the District's institutions and its citizens. Your responsibility is great, it will be to maintain the political stability and cohesion of the District, and to continue Brcko's commitment to democracy, multi-ethnicity and tolerance.

I was in Brcko several weeks ago when I met with members of the Civil Defense and the Brcko District Rescue Service. I wish to single them out, as they represent an excellent model of cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors that can serve as a model for the rest of the country. Their sole interest and purpose is to help citizens, as demonstrated during the 2014 floods. I am deeply grateful for and profoundly impressed by their work, which was presented to me during my last visit. To this group of citizens, it did not matter whether you were a man or a woman, a Bosniak, Croat or Serb, or even whether you were a citizen of BiH. What mattered was that people needed help, and they responded.

For all elected and appointed in this mandate they are a wonderful example of putting the community's interests first. I trust – and expect – that you will continue to

pursue this path. I also trust – and expect – that you will remain committed to the path of reform.

Today the District has much to celebrate, but also a lot of things to do: The rule of law, the economy and education are key areas where further progress must be made. I am encouraged to hear that these areas feature prominently in the work programs of the Government and the Assembly. The success of your mandate will be measured against your success in these areas. And the international community stands ready to support your efforts in this regard. Although its role in Brcko has evolved, the international community remains committed to the District, committed to safeguarding the stability and sustainability of Brcko and its institutions.

I thank you for your time.