Remarks by HR Valentin Inzko at the International Forum hosted by the Shared Societies and Values Foundation

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“Dayton 2.0 – The Way Forward 20 Years After”

Sarajevo, 6 November 2015

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Zlatko Lagumdzija and the Shared Societies and Values Foundation for inviting me here.

It is an honor to join this distinguished group today, as the 20th Anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement approaches, to reflect on twenty years of implementing peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to look to the future.

The first point I want to make is often forgotten; and that is when it comes to ensuring peace, the Dayton Accords have been a phenomenal success.

This is often taken for granted, but it should not be. As the tragedy that is being played out in Syria and beyond so painfully reminds us, peace should always be cherished.

The second point I would like to make is that, while the Dayton Framework is far from perfect, it cannot be blamed as the source of all of the country’s problems.

In this regard, it is useful to remember just how much important progress was made in the decade of the war within the Framework of Dayton.

Freedom of movement was established; a million refugees reclaimed their homes, for the first time ever after such a brutal conflict; the state Government was reinforced and entrenched; the economy was stabilized; and a reformed state judiciary had been established, along with a Bosnian legal codex.

Three armies that had fought each other were brought together under state control; a single intelligence service had been created to the highest European standards; a unified Customs service was working effectively; a single country-wide indirect taxation system had been set up, giving stability to the state's finances; and free, fair and peaceful elections, run without international assistance, had become the norm.

And so while the constitutional system of this country, like any country, will need to evolve, I do not accept that Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot make progress until the constitution is reformed.

If the country's leaders focus on working together for the good of the people, progress can be made today.

Indeed the initiative launched by the European Union last year, which has now developed into the current Reform Agenda, has provided the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina with an opportunity to do this, and it is vital that they now grasp this opportunity with both hands.

The leaders of this country have stated time and again that membership in the European Union is a strategic priority, and I very much welcome the positive momentum in the country's EU aspirations, which the reform agenda has already created.

My third point relates to the issue of constitutional changes.

As I said, I don’t accept that we need such changes now to make progress.

Equally so, I think we all know they will be required in the future as Bosnia and Herzegovina moves forward and the country seeks to establish the level of functionality that is required to meet EU and NATO standards and to raise living standards for its citizens.

If we are to succeed there will need to be a fundamental change in approach to constitutional change and a fundamental change to the perception that has been created that changes to the BiH Constitution will somehow threaten the existence of entire constituent peoples. This has instilled a sense of fear in the population when it comes to constitutional changes.

There is clearly no room for fear. The only amendments to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina that are going to be adopted are those they are adopted in line with the procedures set forth in the BiH Constitution and which clearly require the support from representatives from all three constituent peoples.

The last point I want to make relates to the challenges we have seen to the Dayton Peace Agreement in recent years.

To reach our objective requires us to have a solid foundation and that foundation is Dayton. If you want that foundation to remain solid then you need to defend it when it is threatened. This is a lesson we have learned over the years and it is a lesson we must never forget.

Dayton provides the constitution of the country and it provides clear procedures for the country to undertake much needed reform.

It should not be necessary to make the point twenty years after Dayton, but the BiH Constitution, the fourth Annex of the Peace Agreement, the foundation from which we must

continue to build going forwards must be fully and consistently respected.

However, this is not what we see. Instead we continue to see an *a la carte* approach to the BiH Constitution and the Peace Agreement, where parties choose what they like and ignore the provisions they don't like when it suits them. This is not only a very serious political problem in terms of non-compliance with the Peace Agreement, but it also raises a very basic question mark over the commitment of the parties to the very foundation on which they are building.

The most pressing case at this time is the anti-Dayton referendum being threatened by the SNSD-led authorities in Banja Luka which directly challenges both State-level judicial authorities but also the decisions taken by my predecessors to implement the Peace Agreement.

Very simple put, the Constitution and the Peace Agreement must continue to be fully respected, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not open to discussion.

To conclude on a more positive note, change is possible, but it will require a change in approach from political actors, a change which puts the interests of citizens and the country first. This is what is needed to secure lasting stability and a level of prosperity that will enable citizens to live with dignity.

The tendency to live in the past must end and instead the country must look decisively towards the future and consciously pull together to fulfill its self-declared ambition to be a fully integrated member of the Euro-Atlantic family.

Thank you.