

Remarks by PDHR and Brcko District Supervisor Raffi Gregorian



*Remarks by PDHR and Brcko District Supervisor Raffi Gregorian
on the Occasion of the Seventh Anniversary of the Formal
Establishment of Brcko District and the Tenth Anniversary of
the Appointment of the First OHR Supervisor*

Brcko, 8 March 2007

High Representative, members of the BiH Presidency, Ambassadors, Excellences, Generals, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fifteen years ago, dark clouds gathered over Bosnia and Herzegovina and over Brcko. Over the following four years, tens of thousands of people died and millions were driven from their homes. At the end of that there were no real victors, no real losers, only survivors. But what emerged was independent state of BiH. To give some sense of the scale of destruction, if the same thing happened in the U.S., it would have meant more than 5 million dead and 150 million people made homeless. Here in Brcko, terrible things happened. And because Brcko was strategically important, the war almost did not end in November 1995 because of it. Fortunately, the leaders of the day agreed to a general framework for peace in which the issue of Brcko was to be dealt with in an arbitration that would be final and binding on all parties.

I've mentioned this dark background because it makes the celebration today of what has been achieved since then more remarkable.

Today we mark two anniversaries – the seventh anniversary of the establishment of Brcko District, and the tenth anniversary of the appointment of the first Brcko Supervisor. It is also the first time that the new Army Forces of BiH are present here in the District. Since the difficult early days when the people of Brcko, like their fellow citizens throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, experienced enormous hardship, the District has been on a steady recovery path. We have not moved along this path as quickly as we might have wished – but we have moved a very long way, and the last 12 months have seen further progress towards the security and prosperity to which all District residents aspire.

just as little as a year ago the Brcko District Office was established within the BiH Council of Ministers and since then BiH ministries have designated points of contact with the District, establishing a system that can sustain a comprehensive and indispensable liaison between the District and the State authorities. A draft law has been prepared that if adopted would create institutional relations between the District and the State's executive, legislative, and judicial bodies.

Last year my predecessor issued a Supervisory Order ending the legal significance of the IEBL in the District, thus completing the self-standing legal provision envisaged by the Final Arbitral Award. The District now has an independent legal system, with cooperative links to the entities and the State and to the HJPC.

In September 2006 and February 2007, my predecessor, Supervisor Johnson and I issued a number of Supervisory Orders advancing reforms of public administration, and improving the functioning of the Brcko District Government and its relations

with the Brcko District Assembly.

As a result, Brcko now has a host of new institutions designed to protect the public's interests: the public attorney's office, the public property office, the audit office, the Finance Directorate. The District government itself has initiated steps to create a series of new public companies to manage services for District residents in line with European standards. There is a new law on civil service, aimed at decreasing political influence in what are essentially professional jobs. We have a new, revised Statute aimed to make government more effective and accountable, promoting reform, and dealing with issues of special sensitivity in a modern, legally sustainable way. And, as proof of the success of our reforms, we have new foreign investments in the District, and more planned, bringing with them the prospect of thousands of good, new jobs.

These successes are the results of all those national and international leaders who have worked so hard to create the multi-ethnic, single administrative unit called for by the Final Award. They are also the result of the safe and secure environment created by thousands of American and other military personnel who operated out of Camp McGovern, just to the south of us. I am very pleased to see Major General Richard Wightman, the commander of NATO HQ Sarajevo here representing them, as well as our colleagues from EUFOR. The provision of tens of millions of dollars in assistance from the U.S., Japan, Italy, Greece, European Union and other donors was obviously a vital element of success and tailored assistance today continues to help improve life in the District.

I'm very pleased to see the US Ambassador as well as other distinguished members of the diplomatic core from Sarajevo.

But all these elements on their own meant nothing. It took leadership, drive, determination, and yes, "guts," to pull it

all together. That job fell to the first Supervisor, Bill Farrand, who is here with us today. The job 10 years ago was very different from what it is today. Back then some people actively opposed the very existence of the District. They were prepared to act on those instincts.

But all subsequent Supervisors have built on Ambassador Farrand's work. Henry Clark created the framework for the most successful privatization program in all of BiH. Susan Johnson, also with us today, helped chart the course for the restructuring and reform of government. I would like to thank all my predecessors, including the wonderful Gary Matthews, for the fine work they undertook. They all worked enormously hard for the people of the District, and achieved results that would have been thought of as incredible 10 years ago. They make me proud to be an American and I am proud to be continuing their efforts.

For my part, it falls to me to make the final adjustments and improvements to the District to make sure it is functioning effectively and apparently permanently. To be successful, members of the government, the administration, the courts, the police and the assembly must all take on the increased responsibility that comes with "ownership." My office is not the Government. We only supervise the Government. We cannot and nor should we take their place.

As you know, I am the first Supervisor to serve simultaneously as Principal Deputy High Representative. As PDHR I have a role in police reform, as well as on the VAT revenue allocation dispute and efforts to fully realize through legal and possibly even constitutional measures Brcko District as an institution of BiH. In all cases I am able to advance the interests of Brcko District while seeking to consolidate the capacity of the State structures of BiH. In that regard I can count on the help of the High Representative, who as a long-time friend of Roberts Owen, the president of the Arbitral Tribunal, has a keen interest in the success of the District,

to which he is a friend.

The District has established itself in many ways as an example of the potential which exists in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole. Accessing this potential needs great effort, and a balance of pragmatism, vision and goodwill. Brcko needs the State to take account of its achievements, its contribution and its needs, and the State needs Brcko to continue pointing the way to a prosperous and secure future. I hope we can all work together to pursue these goals in the coming months. And let me congratulate Brcko District on its seventh anniversary.

Thank you.