

Remarks by PDHR Donald Hays at the Bulldozer Committee Meeting with BiH Parliamentarians

National Theatre, Sarajevo, 25 March 2003

I am delighted that this meeting has taken place and that I have been invited to make a few remarks.

We are at the first hurdle. The reforms have been clearly laid out before you. After 110 days of work, entrepreneurs of Bosnia and Herzegovina have pinpointed an array of issues that need to change to improve the business environment.

You, the citizens elected representatives, can help to create jobs, help BiH attract foreign investments, facilitate the much needed increase in exports and ultimately generate more revenues for the citizens of this country... but time is running out.

You have an opportunity to help your fellow citizens compete with those in the neighboring countries, to prepare for your entry into the European Union by opening the way for businesses to succeed.

The Bulldozer process has shown it can deliver the momentum for change. It can be with your help, an engine driving this country towards a better business environment. You can feel its strength. It is a Bulldozer breaking through old, outdated concepts, taking down the roadblocks and setting a course for a brighter future for this country.

It is a BiH process, developed by BiH businesspeople, and now being taken forward by BiH parliamentarians.

So let's think of these as the *first* 50 reforms. There must be more and there will be more. These reforms are a natural part of a structural change that must take place in the BiH business environment.

No one should underestimate the urgency of this. You are working against the clock. If the pace of reform is not stepped up, the BiH economy faces serious consequences. That is the bleak but inescapable truth. Tens of thousands of your fellow citizens are either unemployed or under employed. They can not nor should they wait a minute longer for change to open the doors of opportunity.

But look on the positive side – reform will not simply stave off collapse, it will usher in an era of prosperity. *You* usher in that era.

We all know what businesses need:

- They need a single unified economic space
- They need liberalization and pragmatic and swift privatization
- They need commercial dispute resolution that is rapid and transparent
- They need less red tape and more efficient and responsive government services – such as investment and export promotion
- AND they need European standards in everything from certification to credit rating and business registration.

Is this difficult? – it need not be. There is no excuse for government failing to provide its businessmen and women with a normal business environment, which is both sustainable and routine in other European countries.. If YOU succeed, they will succeed, and if they succeed, jobs will be created and prosperity will take hold.

That is what we all want.

I believe that today's deliberation marks a major step forward in making this common objective a reality.

More than 100 of the businesspeople who have taken part in the process are with us today – they are up there in the circle (point).

And in the main body of the theatre are representatives of the RSNA, the Federation Parliament and the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We have here in this chamber all of the necessary components for a new dialogue in this country; one between the engine of growth – the business community – and those who can sponsor that growth; the political leadership of the country. This dialogue is indispensable in any successful market driven economy.

The responsibility to make a difference lies with you. In the words of Mahandas Gandhi said "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."