

Remarks by Supervisor of Brcko District, Henry L. Clarke to Primary Education Quality Board in Brcko

It is a pleasure to be here today. Dr. Azimov has told me a lot about your work, and I wanted to personally congratulate you and thank you for your success in developing a multi-ethnic curriculum for the primary schools in Brcko District.

There can be no more important task for an educational system than preparing our children to live in peace with their neighbors – to know them, and to respect their place in a multiethnic society such as we have in Brcko. I believe this will only happen if the children study together in a multi-ethnic school system. You have shown us that a multi-ethnic curriculum can and will work in Brcko District.

Please allow me a personal anecdote. During a rather unfortunate part of the Cold War, my children went to an international school where they were segregated, physically and by language, from a nearby local school. After school hours, the children sometimes found nothing better to do than throw rocks at each other.

I was reminded of this a few days ago when I learned that children were throwing rocks at people who came to lay a cornerstone for a mosque. We can do better for a mosque. We can do better than that in Brcko. We can prepare for civilized relations among the national groups in the District, and we must start doing that by bringing them together in pre-school and primary school.

We recognize three languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and

the schools in Brcko will continue to work with that. Yet I think it is also a great asset of this country that adults can communicate with each other, and that before the war they were educated to have equal facility in the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. Brcko needs to retain that capacity. Children must be able to study and to work anywhere in this region when they finish school. Reintegrated schools offer us the best chance to preserve those opportunities.

Any change in the education system will be sensitive, and even troublesome for some people. But with the strong support of teachers and a majority of the parents, and with consultation and careful explanation of how the reintegration will be done, I believe it will be a success. I want to do all I can to help you in this effort.