Remarks by Supervisor of Brcko, Henry L. Clarke on the occasion of handing over computers for secondary schools in Brcko's Gymnasium

It is a pleasure to visit Brcko's Gymnasium, and to meet with you all, especially on this occasion. We are in the midst of a great public discussion in Brcko about education – a debate over our new law, and the harmonized curriculum – which has been in the news for months. Training of teachers in the curriculum will go on for the rest of this month. The beginning of school will surely generate more discussion.

But today I want to draw attention to a different aspect of education: modernization. How we organize the schools is important, but equally important is the material we teach. A revolution in information technology is going on throughout the world, and Brcko must not be left behind. We want to create more modern, competitive jobs in Brcko. To do that we must have secondary school graduates who are ready for them. New investments in Brcko, or anywhere else, will depend upon computers in their offices, and on the shop floors, and in every aspect of their businesses. Every Brcko graduate needs not only his two alphabets, he must also be computer-literate.

As a step toward that goal, OHR-North has used its U.S. Quick Impact Funds to purchase 40 computers. 10 will go into each of the secondary school buildings: the Gymnasium, Economic, Technical and Ravne-Brcko Secondary Schools. This donation includes one year of free Internet access. Moreover, all 40

computers will be linked together so pupils and teachers can communicate quickly with each other.

Another step, later this month, will be a donation of 15 sets of scientific, technical and mathematical teaching instruments, including overhead slide projectors. These aids will be available to schools through the Brcko Teachers Centre. We will be working on further equipment donations later on.

My office has also been contracting for repairs to school facilities. Repairs have been completed to the toilet facilities in 10 primary schools and 3 secondary schools, including this one. We will completely renovate the Partizan Sports Hall, which the secondary schools use intensively. We expect the work on the Sports Hall to be finished at the end of the summer.

As you know, Brcko will be sending some of its best pupils for a few months to schools in the state of Arizona, USA. They are working on their English here, and I look forward to meeting them in a few minutes.

I saved the big news for last. We will soon begin choosing a contractor for two new school buildings, to be renovated from buildings in the former VRS barracks. One will be a large building with 15 new classrooms. The other, smaller building will be the new home for Brcko's Music School. Reconstructing these two buildings, plus equipment, will cost about one million dollars, donated by the United States. The Music School has been multiethnic for some time, but I should point out that the classroom project would not have been possible without the decision to move forward in integrating the Brcko School District. I hope the classrooms will be ready in time for the second half of this coming school year.

Some people have asked me, why am I giving so much attention to education, when the economy is so poor. In the 21st Century, education is the foundation for a strong economy. Our young people will want to create a brighter future for Brcko District, and we need to do all we can to prepare them for it.