

Remarks by the HR at the “International Business Forum 2014”, organized by the Sarajevo Canton Ministry of Economy and the British Council

Check against delivery.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year’s “International Business Forum” takes place at a dramatic and testing time for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Like no time since the end of the war, the country of course needs aid and assistance but, even more importantly, it needs investments that boost public revenues and that will create the new jobs that are so desperately needed.

But most of all, what the country really needs is catharsis – a new start that puts the interests of the ordinary people of this country first.

This is what I have been first hand in communities that have been flooded as ordinary people come together as one to deliver a common objective.

I sense that this recognition that the moment for fundamental change has also been recognized by the organizers of the International Business Forum.

And it is for this reason that I am so pleased to be with you here to today.

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However, even before the tragic floods and landslides that have so badly damaged huge areas of the country, including here in the Sarajevo Canton, there was a desperate need for the change in approach that is required to get the country back on track.

But where will this change come from? Perversely, change often emerges from the most trying and difficult experiences. So it must be on this occasion!

Drawing from the bravery and tireless efforts we have seen in flood and landslide stricken areas, we now need to see this country to pull together and work as one in a way that we have not seen in previous years.

The solidarity and unity that we have seen should be an example to all of us. The people of this country have shown that they want to work together with their neighbors to solve problems and to get this country back on its feet.

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So where can we start?

Many potential investors look at Bosnia and Herzegovina through the prism of political and administrative barriers and obstacles they encounter.

What they see is not nearly good enough so and I agree with those who say that there is still a lot to do before Bosnia and Herzegovina is turned into a truly business-friendly destination.

So why don't we target these areas, which by the way frequently cost little to implement.

Only when we free up business and create the conditions for investment can we tap into the country's significant natural

and human potential!

The examples of individuals from Bosnia and Herzegovina succeeding abroad and successful businesses already operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina point to the fact that the BiH business culture is ever more modern and accessible –both important considerations for prospective investors.

While change is difficult – it can be done and it can deliver major change.

My message to you today is come together and let's deliver progress together in the way we did in the past with huge and important reforms like Defense Reform and the introduction of VAT.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we can do it again, but it will require a fundamental change of approach that must start today.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, it goes without saying that my Office stands ready to support efforts by the Sarajevo Canton and other authorities to make the best of the country's potentials.

However, more than ever we need to see change being articulated and driven forward by a domestic movement of the talented, hardworking and well intentioned people of this country.

Many of you who are here today will play an integral part in securing the changes that are required. It will not be easy, but you are not alone and you will succeed.

Today is the day we renew our commitment to take the steps that are necessary to attract investments and create the jobs and prosperity this country and its people so badly need.

We will stand shoulder to shoulder with you as you move

forward.

Thank you.