

Statement of the Brcko Supervisor Henry L. Clarke

It is a pleasure to be in Brcko, and to be able to meet with you so soon after my arrival. The people of this District have achieved a lot since the end of the war. Their achievements are even greater when you consider the bitter disputes over the future of this area left by the war. I can assure you that those achievements are increasingly recognized in many capitals of the world. Brcko has been operating smoothly under its new governmental structure and with a new Assembly for the past year. Now it has a new, restructured judiciary. Brcko's budget has just been enacted, providing a responsible financial framework for government services to the people. Many new laws have been prepared and enacted, and there are more to come. These are major changes and they are great achievements. They reflect the close cooperation between representatives of the people of Brcko District and my predecessors.

Like my predecessors, I am here to help implement the decisions of the Arbitral Tribunal, which created the District, and which mandated a number of reforms necessary to ensure a just and prosperous future for its residents. I also represent the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina here. It is an honor to be able to carry out these responsibilities.

We have a lot of work still to do. While we will be working on many issues simultaneously, I want to mention three areas that will get priority attention: returns of displaced persons, educational reform, and economic reform. Last year, Brcko set an excellent example for the rest of the country by helping 5000 people to return to their homes in the District. This year we should do even better. There have been 1126 returns so far in 2001. But Brcko is not alone. I was told in Sarajevo

last week that the numbers of people returning as minorities throughout the country are increasing rapidly. This includes returns to the Federation. I hope this will make it easier for displaced persons now in Brcko who want to return home there.

Returns are an essential part of the process of reconciliation. People whose homes were wrongfully taken should get them back. Displaced persons who may be occupying these homes also have needs which we must address, but they, too, will have to honor valid claims to the property.

The future of every country depends upon education. The children of Brcko District need a modern curriculum and learning conditions that will enable them to succeed in the work, and which will contribute to reconciliation with their neighbors. A great deal of work has already been done in drafting the new law on education and in discussing it with the public. National interests will be respected in those subjects of the curriculum which directly affect such interests. Yet our most important goals in education must serve the needs of our children for the future, and not the politics of the past.

I expect that economic reforms, and promotion of economic development, will deserve a large part of my time. The restructuring of Brcko's governmental institutions was an essential precondition for developing a climate favorable to new businesses, and now is the time to move forward in preparing and enacting new economic laws. Among the key steps we must take are tax reform, to lower the burden on individuals and on businesses, while increasing the efficiency and equitable collection of revenues. Privatization is another key step, to increase the efficiency of public enterprises and to attract investment. We must strengthen Brcko District's large agricultural sector. We must promote small businesses, because that is the surest path to reducing unemployment.

Together with the officials of the District, we have a huge

agenda. Yet I am very optimistic. We have had a lot of international interest and support, and I will do my best to encourage more. We will also continue to promote further understanding and cooperation between the District and both Entities to our mutual benefit. Most important, I am sure we will have the kind of close cooperation and public participation that produced Brcko's great achievements in the last few years.

Biography

Ambassador Henry L. Clarke

Supervisor of Brcko District

Ambassador Clarke has spent over 35 years in government service. After military service, he became a Foreign Service Officer in the Department of State of the United States. During most of his career, he specialized in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and economic issues.

Ambassador Clarke was Chief of the Economic Section of U.S. Embassies in Moscow and Tel Aviv. He was Deputy to the Ambassador in Bucharest and served as the first U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan where he established the first permanent Embassy. He has since served as Senior Advisor for Property Restitution for the Department of State in matters of property wrongfully taken by Nazi and Communist regimes.

Ambassador Clarke holds degrees from Dartmouth College and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.