

Supervisor Raffi Gregorian's speech at the central ceremony at the Brcko District anniversary celebration on March 8, 2009



Excellences, Mr Speaker, Mr Mayor, representatives of Catholic, Islamic, Jewish and Orthodox communities, dear guests and friends, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me first congratulate the ladies of Brcko on the international women day, and let me congratulate all people of the District on the 9th anniversary of the District.

Since its establishment, Brcko District has gone from being a symbol of social and physical devastation to one of progress and interethnic cooperation, as well as an incubator for reforms in the transition from a communist command economy to a democratic market economy.

Today, Brcko is a prosperous, multiethnic community whose territory exists as a condominium of the two Entities, but with its own local institutions of self government to which the Entities are deemed to have permanently delegated their powers of governance.

Brcko District has become a post-conflict success story studied by many, envied by some, and copied unfortunately by none. That could be because its success has depended first and foremost on the efforts and willingness of the people of Brcko, who decided to live together, and in peace. The courage of District leaders and officials of the interim government and Assembly, assisted by the International

Community through the Supervisory regime established by the First Award of February 1997, also contributed to the outcome.

The legal foundations for Brcko District are found in two annexes to the Dayton Peace Agreement: Annex 4, which is the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Annex 2, in which the parties agreed to binding arbitration, as well as the Awards, Annexes, and addendum thereto issued by the Arbitral Tribunal in consistency with the Constitution. It was the Final Award that required development of the Statute, which has been updated several times to improve the structure, efficiency, and procedures of District governance in a way where no one group can dominate another.

With the adoption of a constitutional amendment that enshrines Brcko District into the BiH Constitution, and which gives the District effective access to the BiH Constitutional Court, the time has come to envisage the end of Supervision. With access to the BiH Constitutional Court, ruling only on the basis of the Awards of the Arbitral Tribunal, the Tribunal itself will no longer be necessary. Soon the Government and the people of Brcko will have full responsibility for the future of their own community, a community they helped build. But they will not be alone. EUFOR remains here, the United States is building its' largest embassy in the region in Sarajevo and has staff dedicated to monitoring the situation in Brcko. The OSCE remains here and the presence of the EU is increasingly felt here, most recently with the visit to Brcko District of a number of EU Ambassadors, bringing with them interest not only in the progress in governance but in increasing foreign direct investment. The World Bank is also helping with the privatisation of the port and other large infrastructure projects. The presence today of the Croatian Ambassador is a further sign of the friendship of that country towards this important District.

I feel encouraged by the efforts of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska, and the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia

and Herzegovina to remedy the situation and adopt the constitutional amendment necessary to secure the status of Brcko within the constitutional framework of Bosna and Herzegovina.

Earlier this week the House of Representatives adopted the amendment in the first reading with 38 votes for and only one against it. A day later the House of Peoples adopted the same amendment in the first reading unanimously. Here in Brcko all parties' representatives in the Assembly previously unanimously adopted the Resolution calling on the BiH Parliamentary Assembly to adopt this amendment.

We, in Brcko District, as well as the PIC, are united in our call on you, in the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, to adopt the amendment in the shortest possible time.

We are certainly encouraged by how far we have come: what has been perceived over many years by many as a terra incognita, as an experiment created by the International Community, is now widely recognised in its unique and enviable legal status as the Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we can all be proud of that.

Lastly, on a slightly lighter note I regret Severina is not here, but I hope that next year for the 10th anniversary you see fit to invite Lepa Brena.

Thank you.