

ANALYSIS

1 month before
the poll

Presidential and General Elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina

3rd October 2010

On 5th May last the Central Electoral Commission announced that 3,129,599 Bosnian voters (the Bosnians in Bosnia-Herzegovina are divided into three main communities: Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs) would be called to ballot on 3rd October next to elect the three members of the Collegial Presidency and the 42 MPs who sit in the Chamber of Representatives, the Lower Chamber of the Parliament of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The inhabitants of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (a unit which represents 51% of its territory) will renew the 98 members of the Chamber of Representatives of their Parliament and of their local assemblies;

the inhabitants of the Serb Republic (49% of the country's territory) will elect the 83 members of the National Assembly as well as their Presidents and Vice-Presidents. More than 8000 candidates from 47 political parties and 14 independent candidates are standing in all of the elections.

Of the 400,000 Bosnians living abroad only 30,000 are registered to vote. For the first time they will be able to fulfil their civic duty in all embassies and consulates. Not many Bosnians living abroad turn out to vote. The authorities are expecting around 8% of them to vote. *"Because of domestic political problems Bosnia-Herzegovina has still not adopted the law on the diaspora which should define a clear national strategy with regard to this. This is why we have no budget for this kind of thing. Everything is done on a voluntary basis and the associative initiative of our citizens,"* indicates Foreign Minister, Sven Alkalaj.

The official campaign started on 3rd September. It is due to focus on the following question: does Bosnia-Herzegovina need greater centralisation or is it preferable that the two entities which make it up (Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina) maintain their autonomy? The Serbs of Bosnia support the latter solution whilst the Bosniaks are in favour of greater centralisation. An OSCE mission led by Roberto Batelli will be observing the election.

A Complex Political System

The Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina is a confederation comprising two entities: the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Serb Republic of Bosnia (Republika Srpska). The country has a Collegial Presidency elected for four years and comprises 3 members – a Croat, a Serb and a Bosniak – each elected by universal suffrage by his community. The Presidency is a rotating one over an 8 month period between the three communities. Haris Silajdzic (Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina, SBiH) has been in office since 6th March 2010. Nikola

Spiric (Independent Social Democratic Alliance, SNSD) is Prime Minister. During the last presidential election on 1st October 2006 Nebojsa Radmanovic (Independent Social Democratic Alliance, SNSD) and Zeljko Komsic (Social Democratic Alliance, SDP) were elected to the presidential college.

The Parliament of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Skupstina) is bicameral and comprises the Chamber of Representatives (Predstavnicki Dom) and the Chamber of Peoples (Dom Naroda) which includes 15 members (5 Bosniaks, 5 Serbs and 5 Croats) – they are elected

for four years by the lower Chambers of the country's two constituent entities: the Chamber of Representatives of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the National Assembly of the Serb Republic of Bosnia.

The Chamber of Representatives has 42 MPs elected by direct universal suffrage for four years: 28 are appointed by the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and 14 by the Serb Republic.

The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (51% of the territory, 67% of the population whose capital is Sarajevo) has a President, Borjana Kristo (Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina, HDZ-BH) and two Vice-Presidents (a Bosniak and Serb): Mirsad Kebo (National Democratic Action Party, SDA) and Spomenka Micic (Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina, SBiH). These personalities are elected by the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina that comprises two chambers: the Chamber of Representatives, with 98 representatives elected by proportional representation and the Chamber of Peoples comprising 60 members (30 Bosniaks and 30 Croats) appointed by the 10 local assemblies of the Federation. Mustafa Mujezinovic is the present Prime Minister of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Serb Republic of Bosnia (49% of the territory, 33% of the population and whose capital is Banja Luka) is led by a President elected by direct universal suffrage. Rajko Kuzmanovic (SNSD) is in office at present. He succeeded Milan Jelic (SNSD) who died on 30th December 2007. Milorad Dodik (SNSD) is his Prime Minister. The Parliament of the Serb Republic of Bosnia is monocameral, with the National Assembly comprising 83 members elected by proportional election for a four year period.

The main political parties of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina are:

- the National Democratic Action Party (SDA), which has the majority in the Chamber of Representatives of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, founded in 1990 by Alija Izetbegovic, the first President of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1990-1996 and then 1996-2000), led by Sulejman Tihic;
- the Independent Social Democratic Alliance (SNSD), which holds the majority within the Serb community

was created in 1996 is led by outgoing Prime Minister of the Serb Republic, Milorad Dodik;

- the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina (HDZ-BH) founded in 1990 is led by Draga Covic and holds the majority within the Croatian community ;
- the Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina (SBiH) founded in 1996 by outgoing President of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina Haris Silajdzic wants to protect the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina ;
- the Social Democratic Party (SDP), created in 1999 is led by Zlatko Lagumdzija ;
- the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), is led by Mladen Bosic ;
- the Democratic Progress Party (PDP) founded in 1999 is led by Mladen Ivanic;
- the Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ 1990).

Bosnia-Herzegovina is under the supervision of an international High Representative – a post occupied since 26th March 2009 by Valentin Inzko – appointed by the UN. The High Representative wields major power: he can cancel any decision taken by the country's authorities or conversely he can enforce laws on the Bosnian institutions. He can even deprive any individual of power whose acts are contrary to democratic principles. Valentin Inzko is also the EU's special representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The main institutions have little power with each entity in addition to its own political institutions having an army, a police force, a legal system and its own educational system etc. The international community and notably the EU support the enhancement of the main institutions so that reform which is vital for the country's European aspirations can be implemented. The complexity of the political-administrative system – the superposition of four different layers of power (town councils, districts, entities and Federation) and high decentralisation – coupled with difficulties in coordinating with the international institutions and the national elites explains the problems experienced by Bosnia-Herzegovina to a great extent. The positions occupied by the international organisations have however been greatly reduced over the last few years. The UN offices in Sarajevo have been closed and NATO's stabilisation force withdrew in December 2004 and was replaced by a European force. In the field the number

of men deployed has dropped from 7,000 men to less than 2,200.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is not a very functional state; it maintains a massive civil service that is sapped by corruption. The country failed to change its Constitution in the way that had been hoped for by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Indeed the Bosnian political system is based on belonging to one of three communities. This is why the census is an operation that always leads to a great number of divisions between the communities. The Serb MPs would like for example to see ethnic and religious criteria included in the census which the Croats and Bosniaks are against. *"It is about who would protect the interests of one population in the face of another best,"* laments Srdjan Dizdarevic, former chair of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. Bosnia Herzegovina has 40% Bosniaks, 37.1% Serbs and 14.3% Croats (figures from the CIA World Factbook 2000). 40% of the population is Muslim, 31% Orthodox and 15% Catholic.

In December last the ECHR asked Sarajevo to modify its fundamental law which, in its opinion, discriminates against the minorities in the country reserving executive and legislative posts (Parliament) to Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats only. The Bosniaks and Croats cannot be elected to the political institutions of the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Serbs cannot be elected into those of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Serbs regularly question the country's territorial integrity and hope for a greater decentralisation of power; the Bosniaks request the enhancement of the Central State just like the Croats who support the idea of a Central State but in an ambivalent manner.

"Will the Serb Republic separate from Bosnia-Herzegovina? I am convinced that it will happen one day but it must be done in a peaceful, civilised, non-violent manner," declared its Prime Minister Milorad Dodik. In February last the Parliament of the Serb Republic approved a law thereby facilitating the organisation of a referendum on the subject of the entities' sovereignty. The Serbs want the office of the international High Representative to be closed and for international intervention to end so that Bosnian politicians can be master of their own country. The Bosniaks seem to be

less in a hurry. The international community has set several conditions for the closure of the office. When it is closed the High Representative will maintain some of his powers. However Bosnian politicians will have more autonomy.

To take the various players in Bosnia-Herzegovina further along the road to an agreement the European Union and the USA organised a summit with the country's executives on 8th and 9th October last in Butmir. The meeting did not lead to real progress and the communities which populate the country remained divided.

Many believe that Bosnia-Herzegovina will only be able to find stability via its integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. The country signed a European Partnership, an element of the stabilisation and association process with the EU. Likewise on 23rd April last Bosnia-Herzegovina's request to join NATO was accepted.

Finally its main problem is a political one and the country is experiencing major socio-economic problems. Unemployment totals 42%. The GDP fell by 3.4% in 2009 (growth of 0.5% forecast in 2010), the GDP per capita totals 5,000 euros which places Bosnia-Herzegovina 132nd in the world ranking; finally the country, which is extremely mountainous, struggles to attract foreign investment. The liberalisation of the economic system is far from complete: there are still a great number of State owned companies (400 in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina) and the central government still owns the land which companies pay to use.

The Election Stakes

Valentin Inzko has said that the presidential and general elections on 3rd October could help to create impetus to support change in Bosnia-Herzegovina particularly if young people turn out to vote. In his opinion this would only occur if *"if the international community remains focused on Bosnia-Herzegovina and the respect of the Dayton Agreements (signed on 14th December 1995 that put an end to the war in former Yugoslavia and which established the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina together with the deployment of a multi-national peacekeeping force)*

and it continues to enhance a constructive atmosphere in support of constitutional reform." "The country is facing problems that have to be settled quickly," he indicated adding that acts contrary to the Dayton Agreements were on the increase and that "nationalist, aggressive diatribe" had multiplied. The international High Representative admitted that Bosnia-Herzegovina, which still suffers due to a lack of consensus over its future had barely progressed towards the adoption and implementation of reforms that are vital to the country. "Chronic political disagreements occur whilst unemployment continues to rise, living standards fall and the ability of the authorities to satisfy the population's basic needs has systematically been diminished by decreases in revenues," laments Valentin Inzko. He did however highlight the negotiations ongoing with the EU over the possibility for Bosnians to travel without a visa in the Schengen Area, NATO's acceptance of the country's candidature last spring and finally the Serb Parliament's expression of regret in March with regard to the Srebrenica massacre in which around 7,000 Bosniaks were murdered in July 1995.

On a visit to Sarajevo the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton called on the Bosnians to support the politicians on 3rd October who could help their country join the EU. "I hope that during the electoral campaign voters will reflect on the path that Bosnia-Herzegovina has to follow and that they will receive real answers from politicians over the progress they have made on the road to Europe," she declared.

According to a poll by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the elections will give rise to little change. The three members of the tripartite college of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Haris Silajdzic, Nebojsa Radmanovic and Zeljko Komsic) should remain in office. The only change: the National Democratic Action Party (SDA) may be beaten by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) that will become the leading party in the Parliament of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Milorad Dodik, credited with 50.7% of the vote, is due to be elected to the Presidency of the Serb Republic of Bosnia. His motto is "the Serb Republic for ever".

Reminder of the presidential election results in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina on 1st October 2006

Turn out: 54.48%

Candidates	No of votes won	% of votes cast
Haris Silajdzic (Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina, SBiH)	288 321	62
Sulejman Tihic (National Democratic Action Party, SDA)	130 470	28
Mirnes Ajanovic (Patriotic Bloc, BOSS-SDU BiH)	38 412	8
Nebojsa Radmanovic (Independent Social Democratic Alliance, SNSD)	216 631	55
Mladen Bosic (Serb Democratic Party, SDS)	98 329	25
Ranko Bakic	13 198	3
Zeljko Komsic (Social Democratic Party, SDP)	97 267	41
Ivo Miro Jovic (Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ-BH)	59 831	25
Bozo Ljubic (Croatian Demcoratic, HDZ 1990)	42 424	1
Mladen Ivankovic Lijanovic	20 954	9

Source : Commission électorale centrale de Bosnie-Herzégovine
<http://www.izbori.ba/eng/default.asp?col=Statistika&Path=2006Rezultati>

Reminder of the election results of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina 1st October 2006

Turn out: 54.48%

Partis politiques	Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina			Serb Republic of Bosnia			Total seats
	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats	
Independent Social Democratic Party (SNS)	7 265	0.85	0	262 203	46,93	7	7
National Democratic Action Party (SDA)	217 961	25.54	8	20 514	3,67	1	9
Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina (SBiH)	196 230	22.99	7	23 257	4,16	1	8
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	131 450	15.40	5	11 822	2,12	0	5
Serb Democratic Party (SDS)				108 616	19,44	3	3
Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina (HDZ-BH)	68 188	7.99	3	1 145	0,20	0	3
Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ 1990)	52 095	6.10	2	591	0,11	0	2
Patriotic Party-Sefer Halilović (BPS-SH)	37 608	4.41	1	866	0,16	0	1
Democratic Progress Party				28 410	5,08	1	1
People's Labour Party for Improvement (NSRzB)	27 487	3.22	1	5 533	0,99	0	1
People's Democratic Alliance (DNS)	232	0.03	0	19 868	3,56	1	1
People's Democratic Union (DNZ)	16 221	1.90	1	321	0,06	0	1

Source : Central Electoral Commission Bosnia-Herzegovina
<http://www.izbori.ba/eng/default.asp?col=Statistika&Path=2006Rezultati>

Presidential and General Elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina

A round up one week before the vote

D -7
7 days before the poll

On 3rd October 3.1 million voters in Bosnia-Herzegovina will renew the three members of the Collegial Presidency and the 42 MPs in the Chamber of Representatives, the lower Chamber of the Central Parliament of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The inhabitants of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (51% of the territory) will also elect the 98 MPs of the Chamber of Representatives of their Parliament and those of their regional assemblies; the inhabitants of the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska, 49% of the territory) will elect their President and their Vice-Presidents as well as the 83 MPs of their National Assembly.

More than 8,000 candidates from 47 political parties and 14 independent candidates are standing for the various elections on 3rd October.

The issue of the country's future is at the heart of this election. Debate is vigorous between those who support greater centralisation and those, notably the Serbs of Bosnia, who support greater autonomy for the two entities which make up the country (the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska).

Milorad Dodik (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, SNSD), Prime Minister of Republika Srpska said, *"Bosnia-Herzegovina is not a real state but an imaginary one, the international community persists in wanting to foster the "Dayton spirit" which has led to its demolition. Bosnia-Herzegovina cannot be maintained by force. We, the Serbs, do not live in Bosnia but in the Serb Republic of Bosnia. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a constraint for us, something we want to get rid of, a burden. The Serb Republic of Bosnia will respect the Dayton Agreements until it does not make sense anymore and then we shall decide upon our status."*

On 14th September last the Parliament of the Republika Srpska adopted a law transferring State property over to the government of the Serb entity. MPs did not heed the warnings issued by the international High Representative, Valentin Inzko who told them that the text would be an obstacle in bringing Bosnia-Herzegovina closer to the EU and NATO and that it would delay the end of international guardianship. The High Representative prohibited the relinquishment of State property in 2005 believing that this issue could only be settled by consensus. The international community qualified the approval of the law *"as direct provocation designed to cause conflict with the international community before the elections on 3rd October."* Bosniak MPs promised to have the text which they deem unconstitutional, prohibited.

Bosnia-Herzegovina hopes to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) within the next four years. *"The entry into the North Atlantic Alliance is important for the region's stability. At the moment stability and security are of primary importance for the country. Within NATO's fold we shall be able to protect our sovereignty and our territorial integrity,"*

said Foreign Minister Sven Alkalaj. Bosnia-Herzegovina's request was accepted by NATO on 23rd April last. The head of diplomacy added that *"in ten years time Bosnia-Herzegovina hopes to join the EU."*

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle (Liberal Democratic Party, FDP) did however tell Sven Alkalaj that Bosnia-Herzegovina must absolutely put an end to its inter-ethnic division and reform its Constitution in order to move forwards along the road to the EU. *"Bosnia-Herzegovina obviously has a European future, but its road towards Europe obligatorily means domestic unification,"* he stressed. The head of German diplomacy said that it was *"necessary to reform the country's Constitution to make the central institutions more effective,"* and *"come to a settlement to enable the end of the stalemate in the decision making process."*

During the last government Bosnia-Herzegovina achieved or accepted to achieve less than a third of the reform projects funded by the EU's pre-accession aid instrument (PAI).

Central Parliament extended the mandate of the Central Agency to counter Corruption a condition demanded by the EU for the visa obligation imposed on the country's inhabitants to travel within the Schengen Area to be lifted. *"Bosnia-Herzegovina has fulfilled the last condition for the liberalisation of the visa regime. I expect that the citizens of the country will be able to travel without a visa in Europe this year,"* said the leader of the People's Chamber (Dom Naroda), the Upper Chamber of Parliament, Dusanka Majkic after the vote.

The EU lifted the visa obligation to travel within the Schengen Area for Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians in December. It then asked Bosnia-Herzegovina just as it did Albania to show greater determination, notably in the fight to counter corruption and organised crime so that their populations could also take advantage of a similar measure.

The International Monetary Fund has declared it is ready to release the third part of aid granted to Bosnia-Herzegovina by the end of September under certain conditions (i.e. €40 million out of a total of

1.2 billion). *"In the next few weeks the authorities intend to implement certain measures planned for in the agreement. They include the adoption of the 2010 budget readjusted by the Parliament of the Federation and the enhancement of the auditing process with regard to the beneficiaries of war invalidity compensation by the Federation's government,"* indicated an IMF press release which also welcomed the authorities' commitment to maintaining budgetary discipline. To date Bosnia-Herzegovina has received €306 million from the IMF. The programme's progress was delayed because the country's two entities and the central institutions experienced difficulty in coordinating their decisions.

The Council of Europe criticised the authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina over the organisation of the elections on 3rd October. It recalled the request of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for the modification of the Constitution which reserves executive and legislative positions to Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats only which as a result discriminates against the minorities who live in the country. A delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe led by Tiny Kox, which was on a trip to Sarajevo and Banja Luka from 12th 15th September criticised the difficulties experienced by some politicians to access the media and regretted the lack of transparency with regard to the funding of the main political parties which according to the European representatives leads to mistrust amongst the population. The delegation regretted the lack of debate over the main issues in these presidential and general elections (unemployment, economic development, the fight to counter corruption and organised crime) and the lack of real proposals for reform likely to motivate the electorate. However it noted that the electoral campaign was taking place in a calm manner.

A 30 strong mission from the Council of Europe is responsible for observing the elections on 3rd October. In the election of the MPs of the Chamber of Representatives (Predstavnicki Dom), the lower Chamber of the Central Parliament of the Republic of Bosnia-

Herzegovina (Skupstina) the most recent polls credit the Social Democratic Party (SDP) with 20.3% of the vote, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) with 13.5%, the National Democratic Action Party (SDA) with 7.1%, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina (HDZ-BiH) with 5.3%, the Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina (SBIH) with 3.8%, the Alliance for a Better Future (SBB) led by media tycoon Fahrudin Radoncic with 3.5% and the Croatian Democratic Union Alliance 1990-Croatian Rights Party (HDZ 1990-HSP) with 1.9%.

The SDP is also due to win the majority amongst the 98 MPs of the Chamber of Representatives of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats is due to win amongst the 83 MPs of the Republika Srpska.

With regard to the Collegial Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the present President Haris Silajdzic (SBIH) and his two co-presidents Nebojsa Radmanovic (SNSD) and Zeljko Komsic (SDP) are due to be re-elected. The outgoing Croatian President is due to win 40% of the vote against 3.9% for Borjana Kristo (HDZ BiH) and 2.8% for Martin Raguz (HDZ 1990-HSP). As for the Bosniaks, Haris Silajdzic is credited with 9.6% of the vote against 4.5% for Fahrudin Radoncic and 3.9% for Bakir Izetbegovic (SDA). The latter is the son of former Prime Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1990-1996, then 1996-2000), Alija Izetbegovic, who died in 2003. He is considered as the representative of the hard wing of the National Democratic Action Party, founded by his father in 1989. Finally with 38.7% of voting intentions, Nebojsa Radmanovic is running far ahead of his competitors in the Serb community. The Democratic Progress Party (PDP) candidate, Mladen Ivanic is due to win 23.9% of the vote.

The leader of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats and present Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik is due to be elected to the Presidency of the Republika Srpska succeeding Rajko Kuzmanovic (SNSD).

Presidential and General Elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina

3rd October 2010

Results

Change within the Collegial Presidency: Bakir Izetbegovic replaces outgoing President Haris Silajdzic in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The surprise came from the Bosniak community during the presidential and general elections in Bosnia Herzegovina on 3rd October.

According to incomplete results Bakir Izetbegovic (National Democratic Action Party, SDA) should be the future Bosniak President of the Collegial Presidency. The son of the first President of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1990-1996 then 1996-2000), Alija Izetbegovic, who died in 2003, won 34.80% of the vote and is running ahead of outgoing President Haris Silajdzic (Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina, SBiH) who won 24.90% of the vote and is running just third behind Fahrudin Radoncic, a businessman and owner of the biggest media group in the country (and of the Sarajevo daily Dnevni Avaz) who won 30.75% of the vote.

On the Croat side outgoing President Zeljko Komsic (Social Democratic Party, SDP) is due to be re-elected to office with 60.96% of the vote.

Within the Serb community outgoing President Nebojsa Radmanovic (Independent Social Democratic Alliance SNSD) is due to retain his seat with 49.76% of the vote, running just ahead of Mladen Ivanic (Democratic Progress Party, PDP) who is due to win 46.98% of the vote.

Turnout was very slightly higher than that recorded in the last elections on 1st October 2006 (+1.86 points) and totalled 56.30%. Doubts about electoral fraud emerged on the day of the vote amongst the Serb community with regard to the election of the Serb member of the Collegial Presidency. "A total of 13.24% of void slips in the election of the Serb member of the Collegial Presidency leads us to believe that there was possibly fraud and a detailed investigation will be undertaken with regard to this," stressed Suad Arnautovic, a member of the Central Electoral Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The International High Representative, Valentin Inzko said he was satisfied with the organisation of the day of voting. He said that the smooth running of the presidential and general elections "was a sign of maturity and a good sign for democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina," adding "I hope that this will encourage change in

the country because if there is no change then elections are not necessary." He exhorted Bosnians to turn out to vote. "It is your country and your democratic responsibility to decide on its future. Do not be distracted by attitudes which divide. Concentrate on issues that concern you in your daily life such as education, employment, social services," said Valentin Inzko.

The breakthrough made by Bakir Izetbegovic is a setback for Haris Silajdzic, who has been an inevitable personality in the Bosniak community since the war. Bakir Izetbegovic said he supported dialogue with the Serbs of the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) unlike his predecessor, who is violently opposed to any autonomy for the Serb entity (this represents 49% of the territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina). "These are the most important elections since the war. We are at a crossroads and we must choose if we want progress or continue to move dangerously towards our disappea-

rance. The time of conflict is over. We must talk now (...). The international community wants it and 90% of the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina want it too. If we cannot love each other let's try to work towards living better, that's all," declared Bakir Izetbegovic who promised to "stabilise the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and offer its citizens a better future. This means peace, better development conditions for the economy and employment," he maintained.

The leader of the Independent Social Democratic Alliance and outgoing Prime Minister of the Serb Republic, Milorad Dodik is due to be elected to the Presidency of the Republika Srpska. He won 51.90 % of the vote and is ahead of his opponent Ognjen Tadic (Serb Democratic Party, SDS) who won 36.95% of the vote. "I am happy to see that the Independent Social Democratic Alliance showed its superiority in Republika Srpska and across Bosnia Herzegovina," declared Milorad Dodik when the first results were announced. He recalled that he would continue his policy to "protect the autonomy of the Serb Republic of Bosnia." "Our motto remains Republika Srpska forever and Bosnia-Herzegovina for as long as it is necessary," he said. "Either we shall be able to come to a compromise and create balance or we shall make another choice which is that of peaceful separation, living next to one another and entertain a civilised relationship," warned Milorad Dodik.

Milorad Dodik will succeed Rajko Kuzmanovic as President of the Republika Srpska (SNSD).

Finally the Social Democratic Party won in the general elections in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and will now be the leading political force in the future Chamber of Representatives (Predstavnicki Dom), the lower Chamber of the Central Parliament (Skupstina).

The elections therefore led to a mixed result. The election of Bakir Izetbegovic to the Collegial Presidency of the Bosnia-Herzegovina is a sign of hope for the country. But the Serb nationalists emerge strengthened from these elections in the Republika Srpska as in the rest of the country. Bakir Izetbegovic will have a great deal of work if he is to bring the various communities together and make them work towards improving the country's situation.

Srecko Latal, analyst for the organisation for the prevention of international conflict – the International Crisis Group (ICG) doubts the range of Bakir Izetbegovic's appeal within the Republika Srpska. "It seems that the compromise is still seen as a weakness in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Without compromise however this country will split and I am not sure that this will not happen peacefully," he declared.

"Those who are reckoning on the continuation of the situation will undoubtedly be right. Bosnia-Herzegovina is in danger of becoming another Cyprus, a divided country, with growing autonomy on the part of the Serb Republic and a Croat-Muslim Federation that is chaotic and fragmented," maintains writer and historian Ivan Lovrenovic in an interview he granted to the French daily La Croix on 3rd October.

Fifteen years after the Dayton Agreements (signed on 14th December 1995, they put an end to the war in former Yugoslavia and established the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina between the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Serb Republic of Bosnia and the deployment of an international peacekeeping force), the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina remains dark, divided and more uncertain than ever.

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