

Dnevni Avaz
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By: Goran Mrkić

INTERVIEW Hidajet Bišćević, Secretary General of the RCC

BiH's lagging behind is worrying

Though he was a person in Ivo Sanader's confidence, Bišćević presently wishes not to comment the developments as regards the former Croatian Prime Minister

Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), headquartered in Sarajevo, Hidajet Bišćević assessed BiH's lagging behind on its path towards the Euro-Atlantic integration as worrying.

Bišćević is a former Croatian diplomat, and media wrote about him as of a person in confidence of the former Prime Minister of the country, Ivo Sanader.

Strategic issue

Presently however Bišćević wishes not to comment the latest developments as regards the former Croatian Prime Minister as this "goes beyond the mandate of RCC Secretary General".

□ *How do you comment delays in BiH when it comes to Euro-Atlantic integration?*

- Honestly, it is difficult to comment on it to any further extent. I do not wish to cross the line set by my mandate and I do not wish to go into specifics of internal relations in BiH. However, from the position of BiH's impact on the relations in the region I may, and believe I have to say that this lagging behind is worrying and that it is growingly becoming a strategically important issue of not only the future of the region but also as part of a wider strategic relation of the EU and other partners.

□ *Where do you see the possibility of a solution to the problem in BiH?*

- I see a potential solution in the launch of screening process within the accession to the EU to get the responses to many issues at this technical level, including the most important issue of the constitutional structure of the country.

The screening will clearly determine which the central institutions of a functional state are and what remains to the entities. Of course, on the assumption that everyone wishes to enter the EU and that this entry is not another contingency plan in some places – in the case of which, however, the problem would no longer be just the internal issue nor would BiH be resolving it alone.

Better cooperation

□ *How will Croatia's entry into the EU impact BiH?*

- With the Croatia's entry into the EU, after its membership in NATO, a new strategic image of the regional was created. In a certain way, there is a strategic misbalance in a narrow region. The ring of countries part of the EU and NATO contain within a gray zone of countries which are, for the time being, outside the integrations. It is impossible to imagine united and undivided Europe with some new features of division on the Balkans and for this very reason I believe that the process should be continued after Croatia's entry.

□ *How would you assess relations among the countries in the region today as compared to 2008 when the RCC was established?*

- Could you have imagined back in 2008 that defence ministers of the countries from the region would meet on regular basis and have a joint forum? Could you have imagined that the heads of civil and military intelligence agencies would regularly sit around the same table, several times a year? Of course not. Today, this is common.

The progress is evident also in the fact that it is recognised that the security of a country is provided through cooperation rather than through isolation. Besides, numerous RCC results would not have been possible without the progress in regional cooperation.

National interest

- Croatia has its own national, state and security interest to support stabilisation and functionality of BiH and with its experience assist the country's accelerated Euro-Atlantic path in all possible ways. Long-lasting, stable and functional structure of BiH is a prerequisite for Croats to stay in BiH after Croatia enters the EU, meaning that it is also a prerequisite for preservation and maintenance of BiH itself, said Bišćević.

RCC results in 2011

- Taking over the South East Europe Investment Committee from OECD

- Taking over the Task Force on Culture and Society from the Council of Europe
- Adoption of the Regional Strategy on Combating Corruption and Organised Crime