

Mr. Milorad Dodik
Prime Minister
Republic of Srpska
Kralja Petra I Karadjordjevica bb
78 000 Banja Luka
Republika Srpska
Bosnia and Herzegovina

14 January 2008

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding your recent statements to the media about Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina (TI BiH).

The media quoted you stating that the sole intention of the TI BiH report on the privatisation of the Brod Refinery and the sale of Gacko Thermo Power Station was “to do damage to the RS and halt its economic development”. You also indicated that the RS’s Justice Ministry will launch a lawsuit against TI BiH based on what you deem to be “tendentious” claims in the report.

While you may disagree with the report prepared by TI BiH, I am opposed to and protest against the way in which you intend to deal with this matter. Opinions may differ, findings can be interpreted differently, but there is always a way to resolve such disputes and disagreements in a professional, rational and constructive fashion.

In a democracy, free speech is fundamental. Every citizen and their associations, including NGOs like TI BiH, should be allowed to reach conclusions based on research and to freely express these – even when such conclusions are critical of governments- without threats and intimidation. TI BiH is doing its job as an independent civil society organisation. It is TI BiH’s fundamental right to publish reports and voice its opinions. Attempts – even unintentional ones - to intimidate or silence such NGOs are against your own constitution.

Even more alarming is that you have apparently questioned the patriotism of our chapter in BiH. By accusing TI BiH “to do damage to RS” you attribute ulterior motives to our worldwide efforts to combat corruption. I reject this implication and protest against it on behalf of the entire Transparency International movement active in more than 100 countries.

The TI movement stands behind TI BiH and its Chair, Boris Divjak. TI BiH is a serious civil society organisation working for seven years to ensure that corruption is curbed and prevented in Bosnia and Herzegovina and we are completely confident in the professional integrity of TI BiH and Mr. Divjak.

I urge you to settle any disagreements with TI BiH through professional, open and transparent deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Huguette Labelle".

Huguette Labelle
Chair