



## **New Year's Greeting by High Representative Christian Schmidt: A Better Path in 2022**

As we move into the New Year, I wish everyone in this wonderful country health, peace, and a good life. And I want to share with you, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, my firm belief that there *is* a path forward for this country and its people.

As I know from my intensive talks in capitals over the past five months, the International Community stands ready to help Bosnia and Herzegovina follow that path. This also requires the commitment and effort of everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina itself. You and us together can help this country become once again a home where everybody can have a future they can look forward to. Join us, inspire us, help us in this endeavour.

This will require the cooperation of everyone, especially political leaders. Officials are elected and appointed to serve the citizens, who are the true and only sovereign in a democracy and who want a better future here in Bosnia and Herzegovina for themselves and for their children. As far as I am concerned, they are the ones I work for.

Unfortunately, we have hurdles ahead. If the blockade that hampered progress in 2021 continues, then 2022 risks being even worse than previous years. Daily life will be harder than it has to be; social services – including medical services that are urgently needed, not only for combating the pandemic – will remain inadequate and living standards will not improve.

Tens of thousands of people are leaving the country every year. The reason is not a mystery. They are leaving because they feel that their voices are not being heard. They see no future for themselves here and they feel helpless. I have talked to them. I have listened to them. They are telling me the same thing over and over again. They are not expecting miracles or Heaven on Earth. They simply want a decent life in a normal country. It is, in fact, a modest wish.

Citizens are demanding an end to poverty, an end to corruption, and an end to the destruction of a future for their children in this country. These justified demands cannot – must not – continue to go unheard.

So, I call on decision makers in Bosnia and Herzegovina to make a better choice, to work for progress.

That is the choice I made when I accepted the position of High Representative. Let me thank you again for the warm welcome and the many offers to work together everywhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar, Tuzla, Trebinje...

The original and sustainable message of the Dayton Peace Agreement is – never again hatred, never again violence, never again war! Instead, cooperation and peaceful coexistence for the benefit of all in this country. A country that should be part of a united Europe. It is my job with the support of the Peace Implementation Council to help all of you make this a reality for your country – Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When it comes to the election year, my wish and my request for 2022 is that the political debate is not marked by inappropriate comments and insults. Everyone deserves respect, especially those who are no longer alive. Politeness, decency, and respect, not insults, are the ingredients for successful cooperation and collective progress. I also say this on behalf of my predecessors, who all gave a lot to serve this country and its people.

The only worthwhile objectives as we move into the new year are overcoming the pandemic, creating jobs, slowing the outflow of people and talent, and finally starting to make Bosnia and Herzegovina a country that is fit for its people to prosper in, which can only happen if core problems such as corruption and lack of rule of law are tackled with resolve.

We *can* do this.

Together, we can follow a better path.