Lajčák: Reward BiH in line with progress on reforms

The European Union must remain consistent in its approach to the countries of the Western Balkans and reward them in line with concrete progress on the reform agenda, the High Representative and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina Miroslav Lajčák told EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs today at a meeting in Brdo near Kranj in Slovenia.

At the invitation of the Slovenian presidency of the European Union, Lajčák briefed EU Foreign Ministers on the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina before taking part in a debate on the consolidation of peace and stability in the Western Balkans.

“We have to be pragmatic and focus on what is achievable at any given time. At the same time, we must tell political leaders in BiH very clearly what is required at each stage of the EU integration process. Conditions must be met and they should primarily act as motivating factor”, Lajčák said.

The European integration of BiH is a strategic challenge for the country’s politicians. BiH leaders and parliamentarians will have a chance to prove their commitment to the EU integration process on 2 April, when the BiH parliament is due to decide on police reform laws. “The adoption of these laws would pave the way for signing a Stabilisation and Association Agreement and finally lead BiH onto a clear path towards the European Union”, Lajčák said.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative also reminded Ministers that it would be difficult to achieve genuine reconciliation in BiH as long as the most wanted indictees for war crimes and genocide, first and foremost Karadžić and Mladić, are still at large. “We cannot talk about reconciliation without justice.”

The EU must maintain its focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina in the future, not least because of the key role that it will play in supporting the reform processes in BiH after the transition from OHR to a reinforced EU presence in the country, Lajčák concluded in his address to EU foreign ministers.