

Christian Schwarz-Schilling, Javier Solana discuss international engagement in BiH

EU Special Representative and High Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, and, Secretary-General of the European Council, Javier Solana, discussed Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration and plans for fundamental change in the international engagement in BiH today in Brussels.

They agreed that for the transition to local ownership in BiH to be successful BiH leaders must take responsibility for the future, that they must understand the challenges of EU integration and show that they are capable of meeting them.

The transition from the Office of the High Representative to the Office of the EU Special Representative will be one of the main topics at the meeting of the Peace Implementation Council on 22 and 23 June in Sarajevo.

While the OHR's mandate is derived from the Dayton Peace Agreement, the EU Special Representative's mandate comes from the Council of the European Union. The EUSR is responsible for monitoring and assisting BiH in its progress towards EU integration.

The transition from OHR to EUSR is scheduled to be completed by the first half of 2007. This transition recognises the progress that BiH has already made in its recovery path and its path to Euro-Atlantic integration.

"This is not a unilateral process," Dr Schwarz-Schilling said. "The International Community is changing the nature of its engagement, but the BiH political establishment must be proactive in addressing the challenges that arise."

"At present, the problem lies with BiH, not with the EU. A maximalist approach to constitutional reform and an ambivalent approach to police reform are two reasons for BiH's slow progress. The boycott of the BiH Parliament by Serb representatives and inflammatory statements concerning a putative referendum highlight the weaknesses that concern the EU."

The High Representative said he was obliged to conclude that some political leaders in BiH are prepared to jeopardise the interests and future prospects of citizens for the sake of scoring what they believe are political points in their own favour.

Later today, Dr Schwarz-Schilling will also meet in Brussels with Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy.