

No More Time Should Be Lost



The European Union is committed to fostering the emergence of a functional, prosperous and modern democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina capable of securing eventual EU membership, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Commission Vice President Catherine Ashton, and Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fuele wrote in a column that appeared in today's Dnevni avaz, Nezavisne novine i Vecernji list.

For this to happen, they wrote, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs "responsible governments that deliver, and leaders who are prepared to make difficult compromises," and they stressed that "the EU will not accept any challenges to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, nor any roll-back of reforms that have been undertaken to move closer to the European Union."

Baroness Ashton and Commissioner Fuele called for speedy agreement on forming new governments, pointing out that "a great deal of political will and ability to reach consensus was demonstrated to fulfil the conditions of the visa roadmap, and the results are clear. Such an approach should be replicated elsewhere."

Noting that the EU is Bosnia and Herzegovina's biggest investor, its biggest trading partner and its biggest source of direct aid, they stressed that the EU is "ready to move forward in a constructive and creative way, and to deliver when the necessary conditions have been met."

In order to develop a deeper partnership with Bosnia and

Herzegovina and increase cooperation, they wrote, the EU is now working on “a modified and reinforced presence” on the ground while implementing the Lisbon Treaty, which “gives the EU one voice and one address in Bosnia and Herzegovina; that will make our cooperation easier, clearer and more efficient.”

They stressed that EU integration reforms are not simply a matter of meeting membership criteria, but that they are central to “the necessary political, democratic, economic and social transition that will modernise the country.”

Baroness Ashton and Commissioner Fuele identified post-election priorities, including constitutional reform “to ensure properly implemented universal human rights and to secure functional and efficient institutions that can make prompt decisions if Bosnia and Herzegovina is to become a credible partner in the international community.”

They also highlighted the urgent need to resolve the state property issue and prepare a state-level census in 2011 that will provide data needed for EU integration, for attracting investment, for creating jobs and for proper economic planning.

“The sooner the new authorities are formed, the sooner the serious work can start,” they wrote. “The EU will continue vigorously and proactively to help the incoming authorities get the country back on the road of reform and progress leading to EU integration. But we can only help; the real work is up to Bosnia and Herzegovina. No more time should be lost.”

The full text of the Catherine Ashton and Stefan Fuele’s op-ed can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.eu