HR/EUSR Meets Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council

“Bosnia and Herzegovina must focus on realizing the advantages of the Stabilisation and Association agreement,” the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Miroslav Lajčák said when he met Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council Hido Biščević in Sarajevo today.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative set out his view of the core challenges facing BiH following the signature of the Stabilisation and Association agreement on Monday.

The SAA establishes a free-trade area between the EU and BiH. Countries that have gone through this process have seen Foreign Direct Investment boosted.

For consumers, the advantages are clear; products from the EU should become cheaper, and there is still time for BiH’s businesses to adjust to the new environment. In the areas vital for BH’s economy local producers will be protected with full liberalisation until 2013. “But the country cannot loose must not loose any more time in carrying out crucial economci reforms such as structural reforms and in realising its economic potential” said Lajčák.

The competitiveness of the BiH economy must be raised Lajčák

and Biščević agreed. The country must make the most of the EU funding; research and development programmes are available and can help the BiH economy – but BiH must make itself ready to apply for them.

“The country must drive its reform agenda forward to prevent exports from slowing,” said the High Representative and EU Special Representative.

By making use of the Regional Cooperation Council’s promotion of integration in South Eastern Europe, BiH can invigorate economic relations with the region, the country’s main export market.

Lajčák and Biščević agreed that BiH must show a stronger policy of ownership and improved policy coordination.

“There has been progress,” the HR/EUSR said. The ‘Platform for Action’, agreed among the State and Entity Prime Ministers and the Brcko Mayor last October, has lead to the adoption of the Law on Pharmaceuticals and on Fiscal Council but the law on Obligations and a State level Banking Supervision system “remain stalled because of political disagreement”.

The High Representative also briefed the Secretary General on the Peace Implementation Council’s policy for the OHR’s transition to the EUSR. The PIC’s five objectives and two conditions overlap with EU integration. “Solutions for State Property, the National Fiscal Council and a Judicial Sector Strategy represent core elements for the EU agenda,” he said today.