

Lajčák: The EU is prepared to reward BiH's progress



The process of EU integration is the best means of ensuring lasting progress and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative and EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajčák told Slovenian officials during a two-trip to Ljubljana, which he concluded today.

In talks with Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, who will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for six months on 1st January 2008, Lajčák stressed the positive momentum created by the initialling of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina on 4 December. "This good atmosphere of compromise needs to be used to bring the country closer to the European Union. The EU's support for the European integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina will only yield results if it is not abstract. Last week's initialling of the SAA showed that the EU is prepared to reward progress."

The High Representative also briefed the incoming Slovenian EU Presidency on the results of recent meetings of the governing party leaders in BiH, which have committed themselves to draft a new state-level law on police by 15 February 2008 and resume discussions on constitutional reform at the end of January.

For his part, Dimitrij Rupel expressed his country's full support for Lajčák's efforts to advance reforms in the country, in particular his contribution to reaching an

agreement on police reform. He also confirmed that relations with the Western Balkans would be key priority of the Slovenian EU Presidency. Slovenia would strive to strengthen the Thessaloniki Agenda, which commits the EU to providing all the countries of the Western Balkans with a European perspective, the Minister said.

Welcoming the positive political atmosphere that can presently be felt in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rupel expressed his hope that BiH would meet all conditions for signing the SAA with the EU during the Slovenian Presidency in the first half of 2008. "Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country linked in many ways with Slovenia, and we want to use our Presidency for its promotion and progress", he said. Slovenia is committed to see Bosnia and Herzegovina, like the remaining countries of the Western Balkans, get the chance of becoming a candidate for EU membership as soon as possible.

During his visit to Ljubljana, the High Representative and EU Special Representative also met with Anton Kokalj, the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Jožef Jerovšek, the chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Slovenian Parliament, as well as with the Foreign Ministry's Political Director Mitja Drobnič.