

Schwarz-Schilling: Engaged Citizens Forge Progress



Bosnia and Herzegovina will succeed because in myriad ways individuals and groups of individuals are working in their own fields to make things better, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote today in his weekly newspaper column.

“Often the good that these people do goes unnoticed,” he added. “They tend to operate below the political and media radar. Yet in schools and hospitals, in factories and theatres and businesses and homes throughout the country, men and women are working to secure incremental and positive change.”

In his article, which appeared in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list*, Mr Schwarz-Schilling stressed that in almost every case where progress has been made during his 17-month mandate “it has been made by the responsible and constructive engagement of citizens. Those who engage by their actions, not by rhetoric, are the ones who are achieving practical results.” He noted that this progress has been particularly evident at the municipal level.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling emphasised that the dialogue he developed with a broad cross section of citizens during his mandate had sustained his faith in the future of the country.

“It is just as well that I did not limit my interlocutors to the politicians, since between the time they spent on electioneering and forming governments, there has only been a couple of months in which it has been possible to address concrete issues,” he wrote. “If I have a parting thought it is this: progress will only be made when politicians stop grandstanding and start listening to the opinions of others in

a spirit of dialogue.”

Mr Schwarz-Schilling expressed satisfaction that he had been able “to embark on a path that I believe will benefit this country in the longer term,” though he regretted “that it was not possible to make as much progress as I had hoped”.

He noted that: “At the beginning of my mandate, I said that the solutions to the challenges Bosnia and Herzegovina faces would come not from the High Representative or the international community but from inside the country itself, and I continue to believe this to be true.”

He added, however, that when he had uncovered the reality of the situation it became clear that a great deal more must be done before Bosnia and Herzegovina would be ready to take responsibility for its own future.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling said there were encouraging signs that more citizens were taking an activist approach to social and political issues and there were also positive signs that the new economy is beginning to deliver jobs, but he said more must be done to develop “a civil society that can hold politicians to account for their actions”.

The full text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative’s [weekly column](#) can be found at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org.