

## **Schwarz-Schilling: Return Economic Issues To Main Stream Political Debate**

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, met today for the first time with Nedžad Brankovic in his new position as Prime Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH).

Recognising that the FBiH Government's appointment took too long the HR-EUSR said: "Those issues must be put behind us and we must focus on the tasks ahead. I am pleased to see a young and dynamic PM now at the helm of the FBiH."

The FBiH Government faces issues of huge importance to the whole country at the very start of its mandate: police reform required for BiH's a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, constitutional reform and fulfilling commitments made to ensure sustainable return to Srebrenica and other areas of the country.

Today, the HR-EUSR focused on the overall economic situation in the Federation. "The public perception is that the Federation has fallen economically behind the RS – the BiH Employers Association stated these concerns publicly some weeks ago," he said.

Republika Srpska's corporate restructuring and privatisation programmes, and the "guillotine" initiative to remove red tape have given the impression that the RS is becoming a better place to do business than the FBiH.

"Whether this is true or not, these are issues that the Prime Minister and his Government must address as a matter of urgency," said the HR-EUSR.

As a part of developing successful strategies for economic reform, the HR-EUSR invited Prime Minister Brankovic to participate in the "Coalition for Jobs" conference. The conference, planned for 12 June, aims to place economic issues in the mainstream of political debate and form a coalition for improving the business environment.

State and Entity Prime Ministers, Finance Ministers, businesses and social partners will participate in order to discuss a *Charter for Jobs* that would outlining the main actions to be carried out by Governments in the business development sector.

"Your Government, like the others in Bosnia and Herzegovina must show that it is ready to take on responsibility for the country's future", said the HR-EUSR. "The European Union and the broader international Community are here to assist you, but responsibility for reform rests with your Governments and institutions."