Schwarz-Schilling: Time to Change Thinking as Well as Clothes

As spring succeeds winter, it is time to change thinking as well as clothes, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote in his weekly column, which appeared today, suggesting that political leaders put away the slogans of the past six months along with their winter suits.

“After six long months in which we have seen a great deal of acrimony and little constructive dialogue, a dramatic change in the tone of political debate in Bosnia and Herzegovina is overdue,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote in *Dnevni avaz, Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list*.

“Many parties reduced their public pronouncements to the level of slogans – easy on the ear, pleasing to some constituents, but far short of a serious response to the complex challenges facing this country and all its citizens,” he continued. “Because of this we have lost valuable time.”

“But we are now – at last – at a point where we can move on. We have governments in both Entities and we have a Council of Ministers, which, after an uncertain start, is beginning to find its feet. And after delays caused – in some cases – by procedural wrangling, the parliaments are starting to address an ambitious and far-reaching reform agenda,” the High Representative and EU Special Representative wrote.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling went on to point out that the fact that a Stabilisation and Association Agreement had not been initialled with the European Union was a serious blow to the hopes of four million citizens.

“The task facing the political leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina is to take forward the process – already in most cases well advanced – of police restructuring, constitutional reform and reforms in the defence, education and broadcasting sectors, in the civil service and in key areas of the economy,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote.

“By doing this they can ensure that the next six months deliver many more practical advantages to citizens than the past six months.”

The text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative’s weekly column can be accessed at www.ohr.int and www.eusrbih.org.