

Schwarz-Schilling: Job Creation Is Key to Progress in Other Areas

Making Bosnia and Herzegovina investment friendly, increasing incentives for job creation, and implementing measures that will have a direct and positive impact on living standards can all be facilitated if economic issues are placed in the forefront of political debate, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, told an economic conference in Sarajevo today.

"We have lost a whole year because of political disputes that have done precisely nothing to improve the country's economic prospects," he said. "Party leaders have displayed a greater preoccupation with ministerial positions than with economic indices."

Mr Schwarz-Schilling called on BiH policymakers to bring economic issues back into the mainstream of political debate and "focus attention on practical legislative and administrative initiatives that have broad political support already – and have only been held up till now because the attention of the parties has been focused elsewhere."

The High Representative and EU Special Representative repeatedly emphasised that: "If you cannot create jobs and raise living standards it will make reform in every other sphere that much harder."

He also stressed that economic reforms that need to be enacted and implemented in order to get the economy moving have in many cases already been prepared. These include enacting the National Fiscal Council Law and the BiH Law on Obligations, creating a central banking supervision system, taking steps to free up the movement of labour between the Entities, creating pro-actively a competitive environment in the telecom sector, facilitating infrastructure investments, and setting up a BiH Social and Economic Council to facilitate a dialogue among workers, employers, policymakers and other stakeholders.

"Successful reforms have supported the negotiation of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union, which can be signed as soon as the political roadblock of police reform has been removed.," Mr. Schwarz-Schilling said.

"Much needed economic reform is not just about meeting international requirements –but sensible and practical steps that will attract investment, create jobs and raise living standards. We are not talking here about abstractions – but about policies that work, and have been shown to work," he said.

The High Representative/EU Special Representative was addressing the BiH Business and Investment Summit organised by the European Finance Convention and FIPA in the BiH Parliament Building.

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