

Schwarz-Schilling: 2007 Can Be The Year Of Results



Entering 2007, Bosnia and Herzegovina is within reach of the goal of the vast majority of its citizens – to live in a state that serves their needs and offers the prospect of living standards comparable with the rest of the continent, the High Representative and EU Special Representative (HR-EUSR), Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote in his weekly column, which appeared today in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Vecernji list*.

Despite the fractious public debate that characterised 2006, Mr Schwarz-Schilling pointed out that “much heavy lifting” had been done over the past twelve months in a number of crucial areas:

- progress on defence reform has allowed Bosnia and Herzegovina to join NATO’s Partnership for Peace Programme, a key steppingstone on the way to full membership;
- efforts to reform the country’s police service have culminated in an agreed framework that will be the subject of political deliberations at the beginning of 2007;
- constitutional reform will be taken forward in the coming year; the intense round of negotiations last spring provide a solid basis on which to build agreement
- the new VAT system introduced at the beginning of 2006 has worked even better than its most ardent supporters predicted, although it still requires an allocation method that is predictable, transparent and fair.

The HR-EUSR recalled that upon taking up his post on 31

January 2006 he had made clear his determination not to intervene in problem solving. "It has been necessary in the course of this year to see exactly how far and how fast BiH can make progress on its own," said the HR-EUSR.

This progress will be assessed in detail in February by the Peace Implementation Council, ahead of a decision on whether to confirm the closure of the OHR at the end of June 2007.

"What is certainly the case, however, is that if this country's leaders seize the opportunity, 2007 can be the year in which the effort of the past decade delivers long-delayed results so that this country's citizens enjoy the fruits of their labour", the HR-EUSR concluded.