

Weekly column by Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH: “High Time to Form Governments”

At the elections on 1 October, the voters of this country expressed their democratic will – yet more than two months later the political parties have still not formed a state-level government. The parliament has met just once and immediately suspended its proceedings. This is neither sustainable nor responsible.

Bosnia and Herzegovina today is at a particularly crucial juncture. A transition is underway and party leaders need to demonstrate that they can rise to the challenge of ownership to take responsibility for their country's future. To this end, they must make every effort to put together a coalition and form a government.

To be sure, forming coalitions can be a difficult and time-consuming business in all democracies. No one is disputing that. The problem is that none of the party leaders is giving the impression that he considers the business of translating the people's will into a functioning administration to be a matter of urgency.

Every leader enthusiastically endorses the proposition that what he does and what his party does will have an impact on the well being of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, none appears to understand that what they are currently doing – not sitting in government and parliament and not working on behalf of citizens – has a negative impact on the well being of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Many parliamentarians have given the impression that, having

convened their legislatures, they are content to wait until the start of next year before forming governments. Indeed, while the electors are desperate to see the many problems facing Bosnia and Herzegovina addressed, those elected to deal with those problems appear to be showing remarkable complacency.

To emphasise the importance of building coalitions and forming governments at all levels I invited leaders of all parties represented in the state-level parliament to attend last week's meeting of the Peace Implementation Council in Brussels , together with Adnan Terzic, the Prime Minister.

I wanted them to participate in the deliberations of the Peace Implementation Council because every party, whether in government or in opposition, has an important role to play over the next four years. I also wanted them to attend the Brussels meeting so that they would see at first hand that the important issues facing Bosnia and Herzegovina are not static and that external circumstances will not wait until the political parties in this country get round to addressing them.

The world is changing; Europe is changing; new opportunities are emerging; new threats are coming into view. Despite this, party leaders appear to be behaving as though there are no pressing problems, as though poverty is not so bad that solutions cannot wait, as though crime and corruption are simply irritants that can be solved once every ministerial post has been allocated to the satisfaction of those for whom this issue is the pinnacle of political life. Creating such an impression will undermine respect for politicians and political institutions among electors.

The functioning of the state parliament cannot be held hostage to the formation of a state government. It should be reconvened without delay. Neither can the formation of the state government be held hostage to the formation of the

Federation House of Peoples.

The message from the Peace Implementation Council in Brussels last week was clear. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina must not be made to wait a day longer than necessary for work to begin on solving the many problems that affect this country. A state-level government must be formed without delay. This must be the priority of every political leader, particularly those who have a constitutional role in nominating the new Chair of the Council of Ministers.

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