

## **Schwarz-Schilling Congratulates Minister Radovanovic, General Podzic on PfP Invitation; Stresses Importance of Completing Defence Reform**

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, today congratulated Defence Minister Nikola Radovanovic and Chief of the Joint Staff of Bosnia and Herzegovina 's Armed Forces Lieutenant-General Sifet Podzic in person on Bosnia and Herzegovina 's invitation to join the Partnership for Peace Programme.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative also stressed the importance of completing defence reforms, ensuring that the transfer from the Entities to the State of all property needed for defence purposes, as required by the Defence Law, is implemented.

Mr Schwarz-Schilling met with Minister Radovanovic and General Podic at the Office of the High Representative today to pay tribute to the leadership and professionalism that they had both demonstrated in overseeing a successful and exemplary reform process, the net result of which is a defence system that Bosnia and Herzegovina can afford and meets its needs.

"I am delighted that the North Atlantic Council has invited Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the Partnership for Peace," the High Representative and EU Special Representative said. "I argued strongly for this in my presentation to NATO and EU Ambassadors on 19 September and am glad that it came through."

"I am particularly appreciative of the leadership and professionalism demonstrated by the two of you," Mr Schwarz-Schilling told Minister Radovanovic and General Podzic. "Your work has made it possible for NATO to issue this invitation. Your vision and capabilities continue to serve this country well."

The High Representative and EU Special Representative expressed special interest in the issue of military property. "The Armed Forces obviously must own the properties, weapons, and equipment they need," he said. "Likewise, surplus weapons and ammunition should be either destroyed or transferred through NATO or other responsible programmes."

Mr Schwarz-Schilling also raised the issue of the social aspects of defence reform. "It is critical that soldiers and civilians moving to new jobs in other parts of the country are welcomed into their new communities," he said.