Schwarz-Schilling: PfP Invitation Reward for Successful Defence Reform

High Representative and EU Special Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling congratulatedBosnia and Herzegovina on its invitation to join NATO's Partnership-for-Peace programme.

"I am delighted that NATO leaders decided to extend an invitation to Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the Partnership-for-Peace programme at their Riga Summit," Mr Schwarz-Schilling said. "This is reward for many years of hard work and a reflection of how far the country has come in reforming its defence structures."

NATO leaders meeting in Riga decided earlier today to invite Bosnia and Herzegovina , Montenegro and Serbia to join both the Partnership-for-Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, a security cooperation forum at NATO Headquarters.

In their communiqué, they pointed out that they expected Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia "to cooperate fully with the ICTY" and would "closely monitor their respective efforts in this regard".

In an editorial entitled *PfP Membership Within Reach* two weeks ago, the High Representative and EU Special Representative wrote: "I very much hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina will receive such an invitation. It would be well deserved. A huge amount has been achieved in the field of defence reform in recent years, with the net result that the country now has a defence system that it can afford and that meets its needs."

He also paid tribute to the political and professional commitment of stakeholders right across the country's defence

establishment led by Defence Minister Nikola Radovanovic.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative has long made the case for Bosnia and Herzegovina ’s PfP membership at NATO and in Allied capitals, including in his address to EU and NATO Ambassadors in Brussels on 19 September. He strongly believes that Euro-Atlantic integration is the key to the future of both Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region.

“This is a big day for Bosnia and Herzegovina , a very, very big day, since it is the first step towards NATO membership” Mr Schwarz-Schilling said. “At the same time, PfP membership brings with it renewed responsibilities to cooperate with the ICTY. This is a requirement that will not go away, and I expect Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue to work with the ICTY, as well as with the European Union and NATO, to secure the arrest of those suspects who remain at large.”

The Partnership for Peace was created in 1994 by the late Manfred Woerner, who had been a colleague of Mr Schwarz-Schilling in the German government in the 1980s and a close friend, when he was NATO Secretary General. It was, and remains, a highly innovative programme designed to facilitate cooperation with partner countries to extend the zone of peace and stability in Europe.

For those countries that aspire to be NATO members, the Partnership for Peace is also a first step towards participating in the Membership Action Plan, which is a tailored programme preparing partner countries for membership.