

Schwarz-Schilling: Constitutional Reform Critical to Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Constitutional reform is critical to the political and economic future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative and Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, told an international conference in Berlin on Friday evening.

It will be necessary to implement constitutional reform so that Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress towards security and prosperity inside Europe will not be obstructed, Mr Schwarz-Schilling told participants at a conference on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina organised by Germany's Southeast Europe Association.

In this context, the High Representative and EU Special Representative pointed out that the package of constitutional reforms agreed by six major political parties in March represented a major advance. He also explained that in his capacity as EU Special Representative he would seek to play a key role in taking the issue of constitutional reform forward.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative made it clear that next year's review by the Peace Implementation Council of its decision to close the OHR at the end of June will be comprehensive and rigorous.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's future lies within the European Union, he said, and it is therefore essential that obstacles to integration are eliminated.

On the deployment of European troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina , Mr Schwarz-Schilling explained that, though no decision had yet been taken, it should be possible for reductions in 2007 as a result of an improved security environment. He made clear, however, that the European Union would retain a capable force.

“Europe must stand by its commitments towards the Western Balkans,” the High Representative and EU Special Representative concluded. “The question is not simply about ‘enlarging’ Europe, but about ‘completing’ and ‘stabilising’ Europe.”