

Schwarz-Schilling: Attacks on Judiciary Undermine the Economy

When politicians make threats against the judiciary, citizens must understand that they are undermining civil rights and driving away the investment that is needed to create jobs, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, wrote in his weekly newspaper column.

“Attacking the independence of the judiciary means attacking the interests of citizens, undermining the economy and diminishing the promise of prosperity,” the High Representative and EU Special Representative wrote in the article which appeared today in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list*.

“Honest citizens cannot prosper in a country where corruption is omnipresent, where the right connections are the only way to get things done, and where “untouchables” can behave as though laws don’t apply to them,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote, explaining that this is why the international community has devoted so much time, money and effort to promoting the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and especially an independent judiciary.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative pointed out that: “Much has been achieved in this field in the past 11 years, and this is already paying a dividend in terms of increased foreign investment.” And he praised in particular the work of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, whose creation had been a precondition for the opening of talks on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

“The HJPC has supervised the scrutiny of judicial appointments and helped reform the laws that regulate salaries for judges and prosecutors,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote, adding that. “Today, the HJPC is helping to set and raise standards by administering a comprehensive training programme for court personnel. It also provides an independent disciplinary procedure to monitor the work of judges and prosecutors.”

The High Representative and EU Special Representative wrote that: “The independence of the judiciary has to be understood, it has to be supported, it has to be defended, it has to be championed in print and on television and in everyday life – because it is being attacked by politicians who believe the best institutions are the sort that are under their control.”

And he concluded that: “The work of the HJPC is crucial for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina . Only an independent judiciary can ensure that everyone is equal before the law. This is a basic building block of a functioning democracy and it is a basic building block of a just and prosperous society.”

The full text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative’s weekly column can be accessed at www.ohr.int