

Statement by Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the High Representative for BiH at the Press Conference in Mostar

Thank you for coming here today.

What I am about to announce gives me no pleasure, but the deadlock in this city leaves me no choice.

It gives me no pleasure because since becoming High Representative and EU Special Representative, I have sought to promote the concepts of ownership and responsibility and what I am obliged to do today goes against this.

On my last visit to Mostar on 28 August, I made clear that if the City Authority were unable to complete work on civil-service appointments, agree a plan for the public utilities and resolve the issue of HTV, I would intervene to end what is an untenable state of affairs.

These issues have been blocking Mostar's city unification, since they directly affect the ability of the City Council to adopt any decisions and conduct regular work and manage public affairs in the interest of Mostar's citizens.

To be fair to the City Council, in the intervening period it has completed its work on civil-service appointments, and it is now up to the Civil Service Agency of the Federation to announce the vacancies within the required time frame.

However, the parties have failed to resolve the status of HTV and I am not satisfied that no solution has been found for the public utility companies.

On 28 August, I gave the City Council the options of resolving the outstanding issues or making an official request for arbitration. However, despite several attempts of the City Council to come to a solution, even arbitration has not been officially requested.

In the current climate in this city, it is easy to point fingers. But each and every member of the City Council must accept his or her responsibility for the failure and I cannot let the deadlock lead Mostar deeper into crisis.

As of today, therefore, I am appointing Norbert Winterstein as my Special Envoy to Mostar, in accordance with the High Representative *Decision on the Implementation of the Reorganisation of the City Mostar*.

I think you all know Mr Winterstein and the extent of his experience of Mostar. He was, of course, a key member of Hans Koschnick's EU Administration of Mostar and subsequently head of the Commission bearing his name that laid the ground for the Mostar City Statute.

The Special Envoy does not have the function of a Supervisor and does not replace any city authorities like the Mayor or the City Council; all these authorities remain fully functional and responsible.

The Special Envoy will have to find a solution to the issue of HRT, as well as working towards the unification of the public-utility companies, and facilitating any steps necessary to finalise the civil-service appointments. He may also deal with other related issues.

He will approach these tasks in three phases: he will first be offering his good offices as mediator, and working with the parties to find compromise solutions. Secondly, the parties can still officially request from him the arbitration, which then would be final and binding.

Thirdly, in case political agreements cannot be reached on these issues, and arbitration is not requested within a reasonable period of time, Mr Winterstein may propose his own solutions to the parties in his capacity as Special Envoy. If these proposals are not accepted, he will refer the matters back to me for further action.

This approach allows maximum degree of ownership, but still reserves the possibility for final solutions through outside intervention, in case ownership fails.

Mr Winterstein will spend the next two weeks assessing the situation, and then produce a plan of work for the duration of his mandate. His mandate will be for three months until the end of the year, and will not be extended.

Mostar matters – it matters most to the people, who live there, but it also matters to people in the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina , and it represents a powerful symbol that matters beyond this country.

Indeed, the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) specifically called on me at its last meeting to take decisive action, if necessary, to take the unification process forward.

This is a city that *can* prosper; it *can* once again be home to a vibrant and inclusive urban community. The measures I have just outlined will help to make that possibility a reality.

I think everything is clear, but I am happy to answer any questions you might have, as is Mr Winterstein.

Thank you.