

# Remarks by the High Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, at Meeting with Mostar Youth at the Nansen Dialogue Centre

*28 August 2006*

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and a privilege to be here with you today.

It is a pleasure because this is an opportunity for me to learn from you, as much as it is an opportunity for me to speak with you. In fact, I am very interested to hear your views on a wide range of issues that I will come to later.

It is a privilege because you are the future of this country. Not me. Certainly not me. And, frankly, not the politicians I have met with today who have over many, many years consistently failed to demonstrate the leadership, responsibility, flexibility and tolerance that this city requires.

The zero-sum approaches – the *inat* – that have characterised politics in this city and, to be honest, in much of this country may have turned many of you off from politics. You may, therefore, be wondering whether or not it is worth voting in the forthcoming poll.

I can assure you that it is.

Elections in general are important. These are especially significant because of the changing nature of the

international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The leaders elected on 1 October this year will have to take responsibility for the future of their and your country and to lead it towards Europe after the closure of the Office of the High Representative next year.

If, therefore, you choose not to use the opportunity presented by the election, you are allowing others to decide for you about your future.

When I was your age, the future of my country was not clear. Germany had been defeated in war. It was divided. And democracy was in its infancy.

There was no European Union at that time. But through NATO, the Marshall Plan and later the European Coal and Steel Community, there was a Euro-Atlantic perspective for Germany that the country's then Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, seized.

Germany joined NATO in 1955 and was one of the founding members of today's European Union in 1957. And when the two halves of Germany were reunited in 1991, the NATO Secretary General was a German, my late friend, Manfred Woerner.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has similar Euro-Atlantic prospects today. Indeed, the path to Euro-Atlantic integration is much clearer today than it was more than half a century ago.

Today, the Partnership-for-Peace Programme provides a clear first step towards membership in NATO. And the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, that Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently negotiating with the European Commission, is the first step to membership in the European Union.

And to help Bosnia and Herzegovina on this route, in my capacity as EU Special Representative I am building a new Office that will remain here after the closure of the Office of the High Representative to coordinate the work of all

European actors, including the European Commission, EUFOR and the EU Police Mission.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a European future and I want you to be part of it. I want you to be part of it by going out to vote in October. And I want you to be part of it by actively participating in all every aspect of the process.

And who knows. Maybe one of you here today will eventually rise to one of the most senior positions in the European Union. I would be delighted were this to happen.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is a dialogue. While I am happy to take your questions, I'm even more interested to hear your views.

How do you see the situation in Mostar and in Bosnia and Herzegovina ? What issues matter to you? How do you view the closure of the Office of the High Representative? How do you feel about the European Union? How optimistic are you about Bosnia and Herzegovina 's chances of being integrated into Europe? Do you intend to vote? How much confidence do you have in today's political leaders? And could you do a better job?

Thank you.