

Transcript of statements by Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the High Representative/EUSR for BiH and Sredoje Nović, SIPA Director at Site of Future SIPA Headquarters

Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the High Representative and EUSR for BiH:

Thank you for coming here today.

Organised crime, corruption and porous borders are all major security challenges for Bosnia and Herzegovina . The explosion at Alija Izetbegovic's grave and the ever-growing number of potential war-crimes prosecutions provide further evidence, if that were needed, that Bosnia and Herzegovina must expand and strengthen its capacity to fight crime.

Here the State Investigation and Protection Agency plays a crucial role. SIPA has become a robust force capable of combating organised crime, international terrorism, money laundering and apprehending indicted war criminals.

In the process, the number of employees has grown to 900 and all the Agency's departments are fully operational. However, SIPA is still housed in temporary facilities that limit its growth to a full strength of 1,600 operatives.

The fact that SIPA is operational is one of the key arguments I am able to use when discussing with European Interior Ministers reducing visa restrictions for citizens of this country when they travel to Europe. Continuing to develop and

support this Agency is sure to make that argument more persuasive. In this regard security sector reform will be decisive; police reform, the fight against organised crime, effective prosecutorial services are crucial. If we are to convince the European Union to open its doors to ordinary BiH citizens then we must show that BiH shares the EU's goals and that BiH is a real partner.

I am committed to helping SIPA realise its potential and it is in this context that I decided to visit the site where its new Headquarters is being built today, which should be capable of housing the whole Agency by 2008/2009.

It is now up to the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take the initiative and further develop these foundations. I heard today from SIPA Director Sredoje Novic that SIPA has invested approximately 1.5 million KM into preparing this site and that the BiH Security Ministry has asked the Council of Ministers to allocate appropriate funding. This is encouraging. We will support this process, but the initiative must come from the BiH authorities.

As EU Special Representative, I am very aware that a functioning SIPA was a key requirement of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Feasibility Study on EU membership. I will therefore be lobbying the European Council and Commission for funding to match that invested by Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure that this site is developed as soon as possible.

The European Union is already heavily involved with SIPA with the European Commission, the EU Special Representative, EUFOR and, of course, the EU Police Mission with my colleague General Coppola at its head, all playing their parts. In this way, we are helping to enhance its operational effectiveness and providing advice in areas such as human resource management and training. So as you can see we, the EU are committed to making the effort, the BiH Authorities and BiH's political leadership must also contribute to achieving BiH's

Euro-Atlantic goal. I want to thank BiH's police services who are showing that they can act professionally even ahead of the elections and I'm sure that SIPA will be a central pillar to BiH security in the future.

Work will continue and intensify in the coming years as the European Union puts in place a comprehensive strategy to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path towards sharing what is our common European future.

Thank you.

Sredoje Nović, Director of the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA):

Allow me to express my satisfaction and gratitude that His Excellency the High Representative and General Coppola have come here today to visit the building site selected for the proposed SIPA Headquarters. I think that in the future the local authorities will certainly participate more intensively in the building, financial support and material-technical equipping of the SIPA Headquarters. Even now it already seems that SIPA has grown, developed and become stronger. It is no longer rejected and doubted. Now, it is obvious that SIPA is a vital part of BiH's future and a promising institution that will become a model policing institution, setting an example for the citizens of BiH.

I am even now convinced that SIPA is already a state-level agency that has earned the respect of the citizens of BiH and this pleases me. I am also glad that dozens of letters arrive at SIPA every day requesting SIPA's involvement in certain cases. All of this indicates that the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina increasingly trust SIPA.

What is also of great significance is that the operation of the Prosecutors Office and the Court of BiH would be

unimaginable at this level without a state-level agency such as SIPA. I think that the general public is not sufficiently informed (which is partly our own fault) about the work SIPA does, the extent of its involvement in the many investigations being conducted at the Prosecutors Office and the Court of BiH – which is of course, a new method of operation all together. For these reasons I am optimistic about the future of SIPA and I firmly believe that the resources allocated to SIPA for next year – around 8-9 million KM, as estimated by the project and which would be enough to also cover the costs for building the Headquarters – will be provided. Actually, I have no doubt about that, especially as it is an important investment in BiH. I would like to thank the High Representative for all his support so far, and his promise to continue to gather support and donations from international institutions for SIPA, its Headquarters and equipping as well as the equipping of the police forces in BiH in general.

However, Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be a safe place until all reforms are done properly, not until many issues have been addressed and problems solved – ranging from legal regulations to the constitution and political system, and so on – you could say, there will be no safety until it becomes a law-governed state. SIPA is only one of the elements necessary to protect and uphold the law and order established by the Constitution, to fight against crime, corruption, terrorism and similar.

Thank you.