

# High Representative/EU Special Representative Visits Berlin

High Representative and EU Special Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling is visiting Berlin to discuss plans for the closure of the Office of the High Representative and the creation of a reinforced Office of the EU Special Representative, as well as the overall state of the reform process in Bosnia and Herzegovina with senior German diplomats.

In the course of a two-day visit, Mr Schwarz-Schilling will meet with Michael Schaefer, Political Director of the Foreign Office, and Christoph Heusgen, foreign policy adviser to Chancellor Angela Merkel, among others.

As directed by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council ( PIC) at its June meeting, the OHR has started its preparations for its closure. In parallel, the European Union is engaged in planning in order to create a reinforced EUSR Office, which would be fully operational by mid-2007.

The PIC Steering Board is set to review and confirm its decision to close the OHR when it meets in February.

In meetings in Banja Luka last week, Mr Schwarz-Schilling underlined that there has been a failure to make progress in key areas such as police reform. He also explained that if the PIC Steering Board is confronted with a situation in February in which key reforms are blocked and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union cannot be signed, this may have an impact on the final decision on OHR closure. More generally, and as stated in the June PIC communiqué, Political Directors will take into account the

overall situation in BiH and the region.

In the meantime, the High Representative/EU Special Representative will continue to work with BiH actors to promote reforms in this country and to keep it on track.

“I remain convinced that the policy adopted by the PIC Steering Board is the right one,” the High Representative/EU Special Representative said. “Delaying transition from OHR to an EUSR Office is not in the interest of BiH and would only slow BiH on its road to Europe.”

Mr Schwarz-Schilling stressed that BiH will be assisted by the European Commission, by EUFOR, by the EU Police Mission and by the EUSR Office on its journey towards European integration.